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THE GOD THAT ANSWERS BY FIRE

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THE GOD THAT ANSWERS BY FIRE

By
JOSEPH HOCKING



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CHAPTER I

TAMSIN RASHLEIGH

“**I** REALLY don't care who is appointed. It will make no difference to me.”

“But you must have some interest, Miss Rashleigh.”

“Not a bit ;—yes, I have though. I should like a man of some social qualities—a gentleman, in fact. I should also like one who can play a sound game of bridge, and isn't averse to dancing. Beyond that, I don't think I am much interested. That kind of thing forms no part of my life. I suppose it sounds frightful to you, but it is true. All the same, a new rector has to be appointed, and the gift of the living is in my hands. I am sure I don't want it ; the whole thing means nothing to me.”

The speaker was a girl of perhaps twenty-two or twenty-three years of age, and might have been called the great lady of the district. Not that she appeared to attach much importance to this. Her manner of speech and general demeanour gave no evidence of such a fact. On the other hand, she was an unconventional girl, and did not trouble as to what people might think of her. Her father had died a few months before, leaving her an old house situated about two miles from a Yorkshire town called Gildershaw, which lay in the valley beneath.

Gildershaw, the market town of the district, was largely

agricultural, but not altogether so. A few years before this history commences, coal had been found on old Wentworth Rashleigh's estate, and a colliery, which greatly added to its value, was the consequence. Added to that, although it was outside the manufacturing centres of Yorkshire, several wool-len mills, two of which belonged to Wentworth Rashleigh, gave employment to a large number of people in the town.

Tamsin Rashleigh, therefore, was regarded as a rich heiress, and a person of considerable importance. She was a large employer of labour, as well as a considerable landowner. The gift of the living of Gildershaw, which meant a fine old parish church, a good rectory, and several acres of glebe land, was also in her hands. The old rector, who had ministered to the parish for over forty years, had lately died ; that was why she had summoned her lawyer to Wentworth, as her house was generally called, that morning.

"But surely, Miss Rashleigh, you must recognize the fact that the rector of the parish will wield considerable influence, and that, therefore, a great responsibility rests upon you ? "

"Nonsense ! Every one knows that I have not put my foot inside the church since my father's funeral ; what is more, I don't intend to. I imagine also that my views, whatever they are worth, are well known. Churches, of whatever sort, make no appeal to me, and it is a matter of indifference to me who is appointed rector. I don't care whether he is High Church or Low Church.—Yes, I do, though. I've a sort of respect for decency and order, and I shouldn't like one of those Merry Andrews who go in for performing antics and burning incense, in the old church. But, beyond that, I don't care a button. You look shocked, Mr. Blackburn, but it is quite true."

"In those circumstances," remarked the lawyer, after a long silence, "wouldn't it be better if I wrote to the Bishop and put the matter entirely into his hands ? "

"No, I shouldn't like that. For one thing, I am an obstinate little mule, and don't like the idea of delegating what authority

I possess to an ecclesiastic. As a matter of fact, I hate ecclesiastics ; for another, I am told that the Bishop favours bringing the English Church under the dominion of Rome, and while I haven't a bit of religion in me, I hate anything that savours of mental slavery. Do you know of anyone, Mr. Blackburn, who, according to your ideas, might suit the parish ? ”

“ I am afraid I am not the man to advise you,” replied the lawyer. “ For one thing, I am not a Churchman, and therefore know little about the personnel of the clergy ; for another, knowing my opinions, the Bishop might raise objections to anyone I might recommend.”

“ Hang the Bishop ! ” laughed the girl. “ I don't care tuppence for the Bishop. Of course the whole thing is as dead as the Dodo. All the same, I suppose, according to the law of the land, a new rector must be appointed and I must make the choice. As I told you, I don't care much who he is, or what he is, as long as he has certain social qualities. Yes, I stand by that. I won't have a low-born, ill-bred, clod-hopping fellow occupying the rectory. I think I should like a young man ; a 'Varsity man for preference, and a bit of a heretic. The less religion he has the better,” she added with a laugh.

The lawyer looked grave, but did not speak.

“ Oh, yes, I know what you are thinking,” the girl went on. “ I have heard about your doings at Ben's Cross ; but I am not another Naomi Shuttleworth, or Naomi Trebartha, as she is now called. Of course, Ben's Cross has been held up as a shining example of what religion can do for a town. But, as I told you, I have no faith in it. Even when I was at school with Naomi Shuttleworth, I had but little belief in what the preachers said in church ; and since I left, what little faith I had has been knocked out of me.”

“ Have you seen Mr. and Mrs. Trebartha since they returned from their honeymoon tour ? ” asked John Blackburn.

“ Oh yes, I did my duty. I motored over to Mythamroyd ;—it's only about thirty miles from here—soon after they came

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back, and was much amused. I saw the famous woman preacher, too, Miss Muriel Redfern. Oh, it was a lark ! ”

“ I met Mr. Nick Trebartha yesterday, and had a chat with him—By gum, that’s funny ! ” chuckled the lawyer.

“ What’s funny ? ”

“ He was telling me about a young parson he used to know. He said he had had a letter from him that same morning.”

“ Well, what of him ? ”

“ He might suit you,” and the lawyer laughed whimsically.

“ Why ? ”

“ Well, you say that you would rather like a heretic, and this David Godolphin might suit you. It seems that he has as good as had the sack from three parishes in the West of England, and is now on the look-out for a new curacy.”

“ Tell me what you mean. I don’t understand.”

“ Well, it seems that this man did not get on well with his rectors or vicars, whoever they were. It appears, too, that he has been constantly kicking over the traces, and, after having been sent about his business three times, he has, in spite of the scarcity of clergy, been unable to get a post. He wrote to Trebartha, asking him if he knew of anything. As you may know, Trebartha is a West of England man, and knew him years ago. He said that he was a fine chap,” added the lawyer, “ but from what my friend told me, I shouldn’t think he was fit to be a parson.”

A look of interest came into the girl’s eyes. She had been favourably impressed with Nick Trebartha when she had seen him some time before, and the fact of his saying that the man who had written to him was a fine fellow and somewhat of a heretic aroused her curiosity.

“ I should like to hear more about him,” she said ruminating. “ Is there anything wrong about him ? In what way did he kick over the traces ? Has he got into some marriage trouble or anything of that sort ? ”

“ Oh, no ; anything but that,” replied John Blackburn

quickly. "From what I could gather from Trebartha, he is really a splendid fellow. We were talking about men who were not fitted for their jobs, and he mentioned this David Godolphin as an example. He said he was the soul of honour; had a brilliant 'Varsity career; was an old Oxford Blue, and yet made a mess of being a parson. As you may know, Godolphin is one of the oldest names in Cornwall, and Trebartha told me that there is a fine old house in the County, called Godolphin, which was once owned by people of that name. I don't suppose that this chap is in any way connected with them, as Trebartha says he has practically no private means; still, there is no doubt about his being a gentleman."

"Is he properly ordained, and all that sort of thing?"

"Oh, yes. I believe he was a chaplain during the last year of the War, and was very popular with the men. Perhaps the trouble began there."

"How? In what way?"

"From what I can hear, the War knocked a lot of stuffing out of many of the chaplains," laughed the lawyer. "Be that as it may, I gathered that this young fellow, owing to his being unable to fall properly into line, is out of a job, and wrote to Trebartha hoping that he would be able to help him."

Just then the lunch-bell rang, and Tamsin Rashleigh did not pursue the conversation about appointing a new rector any further. Just as they were finishing lunch, however, a new light flashed into the girl's eyes.

"How did you get here, Mr. Blackburn?" she asked.

"I came by train," was the reply. "I was just wondering about an appointment I have at Ben's Cross at five o'clock. I shall have to catch the 3.10 from here."

"I'm going to drive you back to Ben's Cross," said the girl. "By the way, though, I will make sure first." She thereupon went to the telephone, and a minute later informed the lawyer that a car would be ready to leave immediately.

During the journey from Wentworth to Ben's Cross, Tamsin

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Rashleigh scarcely spoke a word ; neither did she seem cognisant of the fine rugged scenery through which they passed.

“ I suppose you know this district well, Mr. Blackburn ? ” she said, as at the top of a hill, they caught sight of the dirty manufacturing town beneath them.

“ I have lived yonder all my life,” replied the old man. “ I was born there ; went to school there ; and learnt my job there. I have been a lawyer in Ben’s Cross for over forty years.”

“ It must be terrible ! ” and the girl gave a little shudder as she spoke.

“ What must be terrible ? ”

“ To live there.”

“ It’s the grandest place in England,” retorted the lawyer, with a challenge in his voice.

“ It looks like the mouth of hell,” she said, noting the many chimneys that were pouring out volumes of black smoke to poison the whole countryside.

“ It’s the gate of Heaven to many people,” replied the old man. “ You see, Miss Rashleigh, it’s home to them, and that makes all the difference. I don’t want to live anywhere else,” he added, “ and I hope to die there.”

A look amounting almost to affection came into Tamsin Rashleigh’s eyes as she noted the quiver in the lawyer’s voice.

“ I hope you won’t die for many years,” she said affectionately.

“ Nay, I don’t mean to die yet,” was his reply. “ I’m a good bit over seventy, but I’m hale and hearty. In a way, I am a lonely man ; I have neither wife nor family ; but I have plenty of friends.”

“ Father used to say that you were the best friend he had,” remarked the girl. “ He told me, just before he died, that his lawyers from Leeds had mismanaged his affairs horribly, and that you practically saved him from ruin.”

“ Ay, did he say that ? ”

"Yes, he did. I don't know what I should have done but for you," she went on; "you have saved me a world of trouble. You see, I know nothing of business."

"That's all nonsense! You are the clearest-headed lass I know, and know nearly as much about Law as I do."

"I don't look upon you simply as a lawyer; I look upon you as a friend," said the girl affectionately. "That's why I consult you about everything."

"I never had the job of choosing a church parson before, anyhow," chuckled the old man. "Are you really thinking seriously about this chap I told you of?"

"I am going to have a talk with Mr. Trebartha about him, anyhow, and I want you to be present at our interview. Doesn't it seem a curious anomaly that a girl such as I should have to choose a rector for our parish? Still, I rather like the idea. The Wentworths and the Rashleighs have lived at Wentworth for hundreds of years, and in a way, although I haven't a scrap of faith in religion, I like the job of selecting the parson."

"Of course you don't mean that."

"Don't mean what?"

"That you haven't a scrap of faith in religion."

"It's quite true," protested the girl. "No, I am not going to discuss it with you, but religion is as dead as mutton."

"It saved Ben's Cross, anyhow."

"From what?"

"From bloodshed, terrorism, ruin," replied the lawyer.

The girl smiled incredulously; what seemed to the lawyer something miraculous, was to her a dying superstition. But she said nothing. They had by this time entered the smoke-grimed streets, and she had caught sight of a tall, magnificently built man, who, with soldierlike strides, was walking along the causeway.

"Who is that?" she whispered.

"Reuben Sutcliffe. You have heard of him, perhaps?"

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"That was the man who had his name in all the newspapers. Yes, I've heard of him. He's a fine-looking fellow, anyhow."

At that moment the car stopped, and Tamsin Rashleigh found herself outside the door of a huge building, from which came the harsh, discordant noises of a loom factory.

"Are these Mr. Trebartha's works?"

"One of them," replied Blackburn. "Ay, Nick's a grand lad, and he deserves all he's got."

"What has he got?"

"A grand lass."

"Mr. Trebartha is engaged just now," a clerk informed them a minute later. "Do you want to see him, Mr. Blackburn?"

"This lady does. Is he busy?"

A minute later the man whom Tamsin Rashleigh had motored thirty miles to see, had dismissed his caller, and stood with a card between his finger and thumb.

"Tamsin Wentworth Rashleigh," he read. "Who the dickens is she? Oh, I remember! She used to be a pal of Naomi's. Bring her up," this to the clerk who had given him the card.

Although little more than a year had elapsed since Nick Trebartha was first introduced to the reading public by the present writer, a great change had come over him.* Then his health had been precarious, while in his eyes was a look of unsatisfied longing; now his every look and movement proclaimed perfect health, while the light from his eyes confirmed his oft repeated statement that he was the happiest man in Lancashire.

"I don't often bring visitors with me," John Blackburn remarked, as he entered Nick's office, "and never before have I brought a lady, so I know you will forgive me."

"I am always glad to see you under any circumstance," laughed Nick, "and especially am I glad to see you accom-

* "The Eternal Challenge."

panied by an old schoolfriend of my wife's. We have met before, have we not, Miss Rashleigh ? ”

“ Do you remember me ? Of course we have met ; but we were introduced so formally, and as it was at the reception given after your return from your honeymoon, I thought you might have forgotten me.”

“ Naomi has told me what a little terror you used to be,” Nick laughed. “ You look awfully serious,” he added. “ Is there anything worrying you ? ”

“ You would look serious if you were in my place,” replied the girl. “ I am in the horrible position of being the patroness of a church living, and I have come to ask you to help me out.”

“ Me ? In heaven's name why me ? ”

A minute later John Blackburn had explained the situation, and told him of the salient points which he and Tamsin had discussed hours before.

Nick looked serious. A couple of years before he would doubtless have met the girl's question in terms of badinage. But Nick had altered greatly.

“ Of course, you will agree with me that it is a very strange request,” he replied. “ I am the last man in the world to approach about a parson. It's true I know nearly everyone of that order in Ben's Cross, but there are none of them who are what might be called movable. Added to that, I am a perfect ignoramus as far as churches are concerned. I had not entered one for years before I came to this town, and my knowledge of church life would not cover a threepenny bit. I am afraid, therefore, I can be of but little help to you, especially as I do not know either your town or district.”

“ But you know your friend,” retorted the girl. “ I want to be perfectly frank with you, Mr. Trebartha. Although I am the patroness of the living, I haven't an atom of interest in religion. As far as that goes, I don't believe in it at all. All the same, I recognize the fact that I am what is called the patroness, and although I am the last person in the world who ought to

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have the job, I do not feel like delegating my powers to any-one else. That's pure cussedness, I suppose. Besides, I don't believe in our Bishop. I have no sympathy with his views, and I am sure I should not like whoever he selected. You see, although I am such a heathen, and never go to church, I shall, I expect, be brought into contact with the rector. I have a prejudice, too, in favour of having a gentleman living at the rectory. I simply can't bear the new generation of clergy that is getting so much in vogue."

"What sort of a town is Gildershaw?" asked Trebartha.

"It's a town of about fifteen thousand people," replied the girl. "There are some woollen factories besides those I own, and these give work to a number of operatives. Added to that, it is the market-town of the district, and although not flourishing, the people are, on the whole, comfortably off."

"Is it a religious town?"

"I shouldn't think so. For that matter, from what I hear, only a fragment of the population go to church."

"I suppose there are several churches and chapels?"

"Heaps of them. They stand at nearly every street-corner; but they are nearly all empty. Our late rector—who died a few weeks ago—used to complain to my father that the parish church which holds over a thousand people was practically empty, and the chapels are nearly as bad. Still, I am glad to say the people seem jolly. They go to picture palaces, and there are dances all the year round."

"Excuse me, Miss Rashleigh, but I am taking this seriously. Is it a moral town?"

"Just the same as others are, I suppose," said the girl lightly. "Neither worse nor better. The public-houses do a roaring trade, and there is a lot of drinking. But that doesn't trouble me. As I told you, I am not interested in those things, but I should like a man at the rectory who would be sensible and not interfere with the people's pleasures. Above all, I want him to have good social qualities."

"I hate to say it," replied Nick after further questioning, "but I don't think my friend would be suited for the place."

"Why?"

"It's difficult to say, but from what I gather from your description, the town needs an earnest man, a man to whom religion is a vital thing."

"Spare us from that!" protested the girl. "Isn't your friend religious?"

"I hardly know," replied Nick. "He is a curious mixture. He's a good sportsman, and plays most games like a professional, but he was never cut out for a parson."

"Then why did he become one?"

"Heaven knows; I don't. His theology, if he has any, is as vague as a cloud, and I'm afraid he would not get on well in the town. Don't mistake me. While he is a heretic, he is as straight as a die, and as sincere as the Apostle Paul. But he has failed to get on with three rectors, and is practically outlawed by his Bishop. He is not cast in an ecclesiastical mould, and while at bottom I believe he is a religious man, he is not of the usual clerical order. I was told that during the War, he infinitely preferred smoking concerts to performing ostensible chaplain's work."

"Is he married?"

"He may be. I don't know. He's a strange mixture. I hate saying it, Miss Rashleigh, but I don't think he would suit the town."

"Thank you, Mr. Trebartha," said the girl presently; "I must be going now. You say you have an appointment at half-past five, Mr. Blackburn. I should like to talk with you privately before then. Will you take me to your office?"

A few minutes later John Blackburn was protesting strongly to his client, while she, with a resolute look in her eyes, told him what she wanted him to do.

CHAPTER II

DAVID GODOLPHIN

IN the far west of Cornwall is a quaint old-fashioned village which has a quaint old-fashioned name. I will not mention that name here ; it has little to do with the story I am trying to tell. But I am drawing attention to it for various reasons. One is, that it is only a few miles away from the one-time home of the great Godolphin family ; and for another, a descendant of the family lived there. This man, David Godolphin by name, lived with his mother in a cottage that was practically covered by climbing roses, and surrounded by an old-fashioned garden.

The word " old-fashioned " has been mentioned more than once in the preceding paragraph, and I have used it because it so truly describes the village I have in my mind, as well as the cottage to which I would fain draw the reader's attention. I was there only a few weeks ago, and the charm of the place cast its spell upon me.

On a bright September morning, a few days after the conversation described in the previous chapter, David Godolphin sat basking in the sunlight before this old-fashioned cottage. The letters which came to him were invariably addressed to the Rev. David Godolphin, M.A., but there was nothing in his appearance which suggested the cleric. On the morning in question, he wore a suit of brown Harris tweeds, ordinarily described as a plus fours suit, with a cap to match. He was a stalwart, happy-looking fellow of about twenty-nine years of age, with laughing blue eyes, tanned skin, and a well-shaped

head covered with brown hair inclined to curl. He had arranged with a friend to come for him at ten o'clock to take him to the nearest golf links a few miles away. At that moment, however, the clock was striking nine ; thus he had an hour to spare. He had spent the last half hour reading *The Western Morning News*, but had now thrown the paper aside, and was watching the village postman, who was gossiping with a crony.

"Billy Searle doesn't hurry himself," he reflected as he watched the man's gesticulations ; "not that it matters to me. I shall have no letters of any importance." Then he sighed. "This sort of thing can't go on much longer," he went on. "I must get a job of some sort soon. It is eight weeks since I left St. Jude's, and as I suppose I am not eligible for the dole, I shall soon be on my beam ends."

He gave a whimsical laugh at the idea, but a serious look came into his eyes a moment after.

"I suppose I am not fit for a parson," he continued reflectively ; "and yet I have a real liking for the work. Besides, mother wanted me to be a parson, and I couldn't bear the idea of disappointing her. But I won't sponge on her ; if nothing turns up soon, I'll emigrate to Canada. There ! Billy has finished his gossiping, and will soon be here."

His eyes had a far-off look just then, while his lips became compressed ; in fact his appearance became almost stern. As we have said, David Godolphin was a happy-looking fellow, and yet there was nothing in his face that suggested either weakness or indecision. His jaw was square and determined, while his eyes gave evidence that he was a man who would stand by his convictions, however unpopular they might be.

"Oh, I would have loved to have stayed at St. Jude's !" he went on thinking, "but dash it all, I couldn't ; no, I simply *couldn't* ! How could I, a full grown man, pretend to believe in old Wetherall's antics ? I simply could *not* help laughing at

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his insisting on burning those beastly candles on the altar when the sun was shining brightly ; and on changing his vestments half a dozen times during the services. It was all so childish. Then he prohibited my being friendly with that dissenting minister. In heaven's name why shouldn't I be friendly with him ? He had the best brain in the town, and had read books which old Wetherall never even heard of. But there ! ”

The postman had, by this time, gone into another cottage and thus was hidden from his view, while David took from his pocket an old briar pipe which had evidently seen much service, and began to fill it with strong tobacco.

“ I thought I might have heard from Nick Trebartha by now,” he went on. “ It is more than a week since I wrote to him. I suppose Nick has fallen on his feet, married a rich Lancashire girl, and is in clover generally. That will be why he has had no time to write to me. Still, I did expect a line from him.”

“ ’Mornin’, sir. Lovely mornin’ ed’n et ? ”

The garden gate clicked at that moment, and he saw that Billy was making his way up the flagged path towards his mother's cottage.

“ Two letters for you, and three for your mawther, sir,” Billy informed him. “ I doan’ know where they d’ come from. The postmarks are strange to me.”

He extracted two letters from his packet as he spoke, and gave them to David, after which he gave a double knock at the cottage door.

“ That’s Nick Trebartha’s writing,” the young man exclaimed as he scanned the letters ; “ and the other is from Ben’s Cross too. ‘ Howarth and Blackburn, Solicitors,’ ” he read, looking at the back of the envelope. “ What can Howarth and Blackburn of Ben’s Cross have to say to me ? I never heard of them.” He tore open the envelope, and read the letter eagerly.

DAVID GODOLPHIN

Dear Sir,

On behalf of my client, Miss Tamsin Wentworth Rashleigh, of Wentworth Hall, Gildershaw, Yorkshire, I write to inform you that the Rev. William Whitecross, late rector of that parish, has just died, and thus the living has become vacant. Your name has been mentioned to my client, and she being the patroness, has instructed me to write asking you whether you would be disposed to accept the living if it were offered you.

Yours truly,

JOHN BLACKBURN.

“What in the name of the seven champions of Christendom does this mean?” reflected David. “And where in Heaven’s name is Gildershaw? And who is Miss Tamsin Wentworth Rashleigh?”

He read the letter a second time, and his wonder increased as he scanned each word.

“It must be a joke,” he said aloud, “or else the fellow is taking me for someone else. But no; the Rev. David Godolphin, M.A., Rose-covered Cottage, that’s right enough—yes, and he has spelt the name of our village correctly, too. It can’t be a joke. No lawyer would dare to joke in such a way.”

He stood for several seconds holding the letter in his hand, then he rushed into the cottage.

“Anything the matter, David?” A tall, stately lady spoke to him, and looked at him anxiously.

“No, mother. I want to consult a book; that’s all.” Without another word, he went to a bookshelf, and took down a clerical directory.

“The Reverend William Whitecross, Gildershaw, Yorkshire,” he read. “Yes, that’s all right. But I won’t tell mother yet. I’ll make sure first. I wouldn’t disappoint the old dear for anything.”

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He left the house again, and found his way to a secluded part of the garden which was hidden from the house by tall shrubs.

“Dash it all, I *am* excited!” he exclaimed. Then he read the letter for the third time. “How on earth did Tamsin Wentworth Rashleigh hear of me? Who would mention my name to her? This man, John Blackburn, doesn’t give any information. He doesn’t say a word about the value of the living; the size of the parish, or any other blessed thing.—Miss Tamsin Wentworth Rashleigh; that sounds patrician, all compact,” and there appeared to the eyes of his fancy a tall, gaunt, austere lady of the old school, who would be meticulously strict about all ecclesiastical matters, and who would expect her clergyman to be of the most orthodox order. But no, that wouldn’t do. If she were that sort of woman, she would have made all sorts of inquiries about him, she would have written to his present Bishop, and learnt what manner of man he was. She would have been shocked at his unclericalism, and declined to have anything to do with him. Besides, how on earth had she come to hear of him? Somebody had mentioned his name to her. But who?

Immediately he found himself thinking of Nick Trebartha, and at the same moment he remembered the unopened letter that had come with John Blackburn’s stupendous statement. Feverishly, he opened the envelope, and saw several sheets of bold, masculine handwriting. He scanned through these hurriedly:

And now a word as to the future, (the letter concluded). Of course, you will realize that you are called upon to make a most important decision. Considered from any standpoint, it is no light matter either to accept or reject such an offer. Will you not come and see me? We could then discuss the pros and cons, and I should be more than glad to have you here as long as you cared to stay. My wife also will be de-

lighted to welcome you. Then you could visit Gildershaw (incognito, if you like) and see what sort of a place it is, and judge whether you ought to take it. You could also learn from the patroness of the living many things that I am unable to tell you.

Do try to manage it. I am happily situated as far as business goes just now, and could arrange for a good deal of spare time. Bring your golf clubs with you, and even although I may be unable to get away, my wife, who has a handicap of four under the L.G.U., could give you a game.

Hoping to hear from you soon, and, what is infinitely better, to see you.

Your old friend,

NICK TREBARTHA.

"By Jove," he cried. "This is great! Fancy being rector of such a parish. I can have no end of a good time. It is true, Nick draws rather a gloomy picture of the town, but it is sure to be all right. I must tell mother about it."

At that moment, a little serving-maid appeared, and told him that Mr. Tom Trefrew was waiting in the road for him, with his car.

"Dash it all!" cried David. "I had forgotten all about Tom, and I don't feel a bit like playing golf. Those blessed letters have driven it out of my mind."

"All right, Tom, old man," he shouted, as he made his way down the garden path. "I will be with you in five minutes. I want to have a word with my mother, and then I am ready."

"Why were you consulting the clerical directory, David?" asked Mrs. Godolphin, as he entered the house. That lady was looking at the volume, which he had left lying on the table.

"There, mother, read that!" he exclaimed, throwing John Blackburn's letter before her as he spoke.

"You seem very excited about it."

"I am; so will you be when you have read my morning's

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correspondence. Here have I been, for eight weeks, kicking up my heels and without any prospect of a job, while all the time—— But read, mother, read ! ”

Mrs. Godolphin slowly put on her spectacles. She was a tall, rather austere looking lady of between fifty and sixty years of age, and prided herself on never getting excited. She had been a Granville before her marriage, and was often twitted, thirty years before, on having made a bad match when she married David Godolphin. It was true he bore as good a name as her own, but he was wellnigh penniless, and ever since his death she had had a hard struggle to educate her son, and keep herself in anything like accordance with her place in society.

She read the letter through twice without speaking. Then she threw it on the table almost contemptuously.

“ Most unsatisfactory,” she remarked.

“ Why, mother, I think it’s dashed good ! You know what opinion the Bishop has of me, and when I think of what my last vicar said——”

“ Don’t talk to me about your last vicar ! ” she retorted scornfully. “ The fellow is a low-bred, unmannerly clown, and I wonder at any Bishop ordaining him. But there, the Church is not what it once was, and I am almost sorry that I advised you to become a clergyman. Yes, I regard this communication from the man Blackburn as most unsatisfactory.”

“ Why, mother ? ”

“ If you had been a stable boy, he couldn’t have written more curtly. Indeed, as I said, the whole thing is unsatisfactory. If I were the patroness of the living, I should have written myself to the man I had selected, and asked him to come and stay at my house. But there, the old days are gone.”

“ And a jolly good job, too,” laughed David.

“ It may seem so to you, but not to me. When, years ago, I decided that you should take orders, I thought that, with your name and family connexions, you would have been well

on the way to a bishopric by now. But families don't count nowadays."

"Then you think I should decline this, mother?" He knew what her answer would be before he spoke, but he loved to hear her air her views on modern democratic ways.

"I don't say that, but I shouldn't be in too great a hurry to accept."

"Nick Trebartha has also written me," he informed her. "He lives on the borders of Yorkshire, and it was through him that this letter came."

"What does he say?"

"Read for yourself," and he passed her the letter. "He doesn't seem to think I am fitted for the job," he added.

"And why?" the old lady spoke indignantly.

"Doesn't think I am religious enough."

"At any rate, you are a gentleman," she ejaculated.

* * * *

David Godolphin did not play a good game of golf that day, and Tom Trefrew rejoiced that for once, at any rate, he was victorious. The truth was, that although he was to all appearances the same happy-go-lucky fellow, he was much exercised as to what he ought to do. No one realized more than David that he was not cut on a clerical pattern. As we have said, he had consented to be a clergyman largely to please his mother, but he had never realized its inwardness. Since his experiences in the Army, moreover, he had been led to read a good deal of Biblical criticism, and while this reading had not destroyed his faith, he had been led to regard many clerical beliefs and practices as mere survivals of Paganism. Added to this, he was anything but a discreet young man, and had freely given expression to current beliefs in the agnostic world. This had led to unpleasant experiences.

"I've read Mr. Trebartha's letter," his mother greeted him, when he returned to Rose-covered Cottage that evening.

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"Yes, mother. Does it give you the information you desire?"

"I don't like it," and Mrs. Godolphin spoke incisively. "What right has that young man to pass judgment on you? You have been ordained a clergyman and that should be enough. Of course, I have no sympathy with many of your notions, but he has no right to express his opinions. Still, I have been to see Tabitha Trebartha to-day. She has lately returned from Ben's Cross."

"Has she, by Jove?"

"Yes. I think you ought to accept Nick Trebartha's invitation, David. You would be able to learn many things of which you are now ignorant."

"Such as——?" queried David.

"What kind of rectory it is; what the living is really worth; and what are the social amenities of the district, as well as what kind of a woman this Tamsin Rashleigh is. I wonder if she is any relation to the Cornish Rashleighs? It's a good name."

"Did Miss Trebartha tell you how Nick was looking?" asked David. "He had a rough time at the Front, and at one time I thought he would never recover."

"She didn't say, but she told me that he was very kind to her. Tabitha was never so well off as she is to-day. I quite envied her."

"Yes," reflected David, "I must consider that aspect of the situation. She girds terribly at her poverty, poor old dear, and I haven't been able to help her. By Jove, it would be great if I could take her to live with me at a well appointed rectory, and give her some comforts in her old age."

It came about, therefore, that three days later David was on his way to Ben's Cross. Catching the Riviera express at Penzance in the morning, he reached London in time to take the last train for Ben's Cross that same day. Daylight had, of course, gone by the time he reached Lancashire, but he

was able to see sufficient to realize the difference between the grim, grimy North and the sunny South, and when at length he reached Ben's Cross station and breathed the atmosphere of that overgrown village he felt depressed.

But this feeling quickly passed away. No sooner had the train stopped than Nick Trebatha's stalwart form appeared, and his welcome rang in David's ears.

"By Jove, old man, this is great! I *am* glad to see you!"

A few minutes later they were passing through the busy streets of Ben's Cross, and David could not help noticing the contrast between the North and the South. For one thing he thought that the people were smaller of stature, and for another there was not that air of repose and ease so characteristic of the county he had left that morning. Still, he paid little heed to this. He was sitting by the side of his old school fellow, and was being driven in a luxurious car to that school-fellow's home.

"I hope I am not a nuisance, Nick," he apologized. "It's a shame to inflict myself, who am a stranger to your wife, upon your hospitality."

"Inflict yourself be hanged!" cried Nick. "You are as welcome as the flowers in May. As for my wife, she has been busy with plans for your entertainment ever since she knew you were coming."

"I have not come to be entertained. I have simply come for a chat with you, and to learn something of that town with the outlandish name; Gildershaw, I think you said it was called."

"But that isn't going to keep us from having a jolly good time," and Nick looked at his friend with real affection.

"This is glorious, simply glorious!" exclaimed David, when at length the car drew up before the hospitable doors of Nick's house. "This is home all compact, old chap."

"Yes, this old house was the one joy I had for months. You see, when I came here I was in the dickens of a stew. My

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uncle had left me practically everything he possessed, but that everything seemed to amount to nothing but a peck of troubles. As John Blackburn said to me, I was well off on paper, but in reality I didn't know whether I was worth a five-pound note. The whole district was seething with discontent, and the industrial strife was terrible. But we weathered the storm, and here we are. This old house is not unlike Godolphin, is it ? ”

“ Godolphin with a difference,” laughed David. “ But it is very beautiful, and I congratulate you.”

The door opened, and David Godolphin found himself in a well-lit hall, which seemed to add to the homeliness which the exterior of the house had suggested. He saw great black oak beams stretched across the ceiling, while a massive oak stairway led to the upper storey.

“ We are glad to see you, Mr. Godolphin,” laughed a girlish voice, “ and I am glad you have come. Nick hasn't been fit to live with this afternoon, he's been so excited at the thought of your coming. You *are* Mr. Godolphin, aren't you ? ”

“ I am *David* Godolphin,” he answered emphasizing the name, “ while you,” and he looked steadily into the girl's happy face, “ are Mrs. Nick Trebartha.”

Naomi Trebartha did not speak for a few seconds. She looked steadily into her visitor's face, and appeared to be trying to make up her mind about something.

As we have said, David Godolphin was a happy-looking fellow with laughing blue eyes, tanned face and a mass of brown hair inclined to curl. He had a typical Cornish face of the best order, and while not handsome in the usual acceptance of the word, was, as an old Cornishwoman once said to me, “ good to look upon.”

Nick had spoken freely to Naomi about his friend. He had told her about their schoolboy days ; described his first experiences at Harrow, and how David Godolphin had befriended him ; told her too about their Army days, and aired

his opinions about his friend generally. Evidently, too, Naomi's scrutiny led her to confirm what her husband had said.

"No," she said. "I am not Mrs. Nick Trebartha. I am *Naomi*."

David instantly grasped her meaning.

"Look here," he cried joyfully, "do you really mean that?"

"Of course I do."

"Oh, it's splendid! It's worth coming all the way from Cornwall to Lancashire for. You will call me David, won't you, just as Nick does?"

"I shan't call you the Reverend David," answered the girl.

"Reverend? There is nothing reverend about me! Look here, are you of Nick's opinion, and——"

"Not a word about that," protested Naomi. "We are going to have dinner before there is a discussion about anything."

"I *am* glad, David, I *am* glad!" Nick exclaimed as he led his friend up the broad stairway. "You see, I didn't know."

"Didn't know what?" asked David.

"About Naomi."

"I don't quite get you."

"Naomi either makes friends right away, or she isn't friends at all," laughed Nick. "She either takes to people or she doesn't; and she has taken to you. Didn't you see she had? It isn't a matter of judgment with her. I don't think she has much judgment. Judgment means a sifting of evidence, a weighing of pros and cons. With her, it's a matter of intuition as to whether she will like people or not. Here's your bathroom, old chap, and this is your bedroom. You will be able to make yourself comfortable, won't you? Naomi will be awfully disappointed if you can't."

"There will be no fear of her disappointment if it depends on me," replied David.

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An hour later, dinner was over, and the two men had adjourned to the old library which we have described elsewhere.

"You are glad of the fire, aren't you David?" asked Nick, as his friend drew his chair close to the great open fireplace.

"Last night I should have laughed at such a thing as a fire," was the response. "It's midsummer weather in Cornwall, while here——"

"The summer's gone," Nick concluded the sentence. "Yes, the Lancashire manufacturing districts are different from the Cornish, and the same may be said of Yorkshire. All the same, it's a great county, and the people are the finest in the world."

"With the exception of the Cornish," laughed David.

"No, not even excepting the Cornish; but we won't argue about that now. It's great to see you sitting in the library of my home, old man; greater still to know that my wife likes you."

A minute later they had entered into a conversation, which was destined, for weal or for woe, to decide the course of David Godolphin's life.

CHAPTER III

NICK AND DAVID

“**I** KNOW you are aching to ask questions, David, old man,” began Nick. “Let’s have them. You didn’t like my letter, did you?”

“To be frank, I didn’t,” replied David. “Neither did my mother; in fact, she resented it horribly.”

Nick laughed heartily. “She would,” he said.

“Yes. You see, mother lives in a past age, and she can’t understand what people are thinking to-day. She is altogether of the old school. My father was a Godolphin, and she was a Granville, and to all intents and purposes she lives in the times when the Godolphins and Granvilles were great people. She can’t understand the common people thinking for themselves, and resents the idea that anyone should have the temerity to offer an opinion, where her family are concerned.”

“Yes, I remember her. She puts me in mind of an old lady who once told me she would rather be killed by a doctor who was a gentleman, than be cured by a man who ‘hadn’t a grandfather.’ But that isn’t the thing that’s troubling you now, David, old man. You got John Blackburn’s letter, didn’t you?”

“Yes. It was only a curt note saying that the late rector of Gildershaw had died, and that the patroness of the living, having heard of me, wanted to know whether I would accept it if it were offered me.” He passed Nick the letter as he spoke. “There, read for yourself,” he added.

“That’s just like John Blackburn. He never wastes words,

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and never commits himself, especially on paper. All the same, the job's open to you if you'll take it."

"You know that, do you?"

"Yes, I know that."

"Then why did you write so dubiously. What's wrong with it?"

"Nothing's wrong with it—in one sense."

"Then why did you say what you did?"

"That is of secondary importance, and the answer to it can wait. There are other questions you want to ask?"

"Heaps of them," David laughed. "I am bursting with curiosity."

"Then fire away. Come in, my dear:" (this to his wife) "I am sure David won't mind your being present. Besides, you know more about Gildershaw than I do."

"Of course I don't object to Naomi being present. I'm only too glad to think that she is interested in me. To begin then, who is Miss Tamsin Rashleigh?"

"Didn't Blackburn tell you? She is the patroness of the living; owns the big house and all that sort of thing," replied Nick.

"Yes, but who is she? Is she young or old? Heterodox or orthodox? Pleasant or unpleasant? Mother didn't think she was very civil."

"Why?"

"According to her ideas she should have asked me to stay at Wentworth Hall; indeed made me an honoured guest while I found out every detail about the parish. I have made up my mind as to what she is like," he added. "Tell me if I am right, will you?"

"And what have you concluded concerning her?"

"Oh, I pictured her as a kind of replica of my mother; a tall stately old dame, who is interested in every detail of the parish; a patrician to her finger tips; orthodox to the marrow, and above all a good churchwoman. Is that right?"

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Both Naomi and Nick laughed heartily.

"I am not going to tell you just now," replied Nick, again exchanging a quick glance with his wife. "She has invited us all over to lunch to-morrow, and as I expect you will want to accept you will be able to judge for yourself. What next?"

"Well," said David, "as you will see, this man Blackburn told me nothing. What sort of a parish is Gildershaw, and where is it? I bought a map of Yorkshire, but I couldn't discover its whereabouts. Is there any hunting, any shooting, and are there any golf courses in the district?"

"As to hunting, I believe the North Yorkshire hounds have a meet ten miles away. But I don't know anything about it. I know there is good shooting, however. The Wentworth pheasants are preserved, while Miss Rashleigh has about three thousand acres of moors. You will just be in time for the partridge shooting. As for golf courses, I think there are three, but I haven't played on any of them. What next?"

"What sort of a rectory is there, and what is the living worth?"

"The rectory is a fine old house, surrounded by several acres of glebe land, but it appears that old Whitecross neglected the place, and that a good deal of money will have to be spent in decoration and that kind of thing. Still, it is a comfortable house, and Whitecross, who was a great bookworm, found it a perfect haven of repose. It is a most valuable living, one of the richest country livings in the county, and worth about a thousand a year. From what I can hear, there has been a good deal of heart-burning already, that you, who have no knowledge of, or claim on, the district, should have it offered you. Oh, I can assure you, from that standpoint, you will be in clover."

"And the church?" asked David. "What kind of a church is it?"

"A big stone building, with a great square tower. It seats more than a thousand people, and is, from what I can hear, an

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Elizabethan structure, although some say it is pre-Reformation. It stands just above the town, and, from the tower door, you can see the whole of Gildershaw."

"It has been restored, I suppose?"

"Yes, a good many years ago, and restored well, too. Indeed, it looks almost like a cathedral. From what I gather, the grandfather of the present owner of Wentworth was a rich man, and very religious. Apparently he was the prime mover in the restoration of the church."

"And is the present owner rich?" asked David.

"I should think she is fairly well off. There is a big colliery on the estate which belongs to her, as well as two woollen factories in the town itself. She also told me that she was prepared to put the rectory in good order."

"And what sort of a town is Gildershaw?"

"It's a town of fifteen to twenty thousand inhabitants, and the centre of a big parish. It is also the market town of a big district, which is mainly agricultural. It is about thirty miles from here, and although not strictly within the industrial part of Yorkshire, it is an important centre. It is nothing like Ben's Cross," he added; "it was an old town before Ben's Cross began to be."

"And what are the social amenities?" David asked. "I am thinking of my mother in asking this. She solemnly impressed upon me, before I left home, the necessity of knowing all about it."

"I can't speak confidently about that," replied Nick. "Like other industrial towns it has suffered from bad trade. All the same, there are a good many well-to-do people there. As far as I know Miss Rashleigh is the only person belonging to what is called a county family in the district, but there are a number of people who live in fine houses, and, from what I hear, they are very sociable."

"By Jove, you have painted a very attractive picture."

"Have I?"

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"Yes. I don't see what a fellow could want more."

"Don't you?"

"Not according to your description. Is it healthy?"

"I should say so, certainly. As I told you the town is situated outside the industrial area, and thus is outside the smoke zone, which is more than can be said of Ben's Cross. There is some very attractive pastoral scenery around the town, while northward are wild, rugged moors."

"Then I don't see what more a fellow can want."

"Don't you?"

"Do you?"

"It all depends upon the standpoint from which you look at it."

"Come now, Nick, old man," and there was a suggestion of discomfort in David's eyes. "Why did you write to me as you did? Why were you so doubtful as to whether I ought to accept the living?"

"Do you wish me to speak quite frankly?"

"Of course I do. It would be no use your speaking at all else. What's on your mind, old chap?"

Nick hesitated a few seconds before replying.

"David, are the questions you asked of the chief importance to you?"

Godolphin looked at his friend doubtfully.

"I don't understand you," he said.

"I will be brutally frank, then. If you look upon Gildershaw as a comfortable place to live in; if you regard it as a pleasant social centre where you may be able to find congenial friends, and if you look upon it as a parish where the emoluments are fairly good, I should say it is all you could desire. But if you look at it from the standpoint of a clergyman——"

"Of course I had that in my mind the whole time," broke in David, "and, as a consequence, took it for granted. Why do you make such a remark?"

"Because there is a tremendous difference in the two

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view-points, isn't there ? I had that in my mind when I wrote you. David, would you mind telling me what your ideas concerning the ministry are ? ”

“ I don't quite follow you. I suppose a clergyman's duties are to uphold the Church, and to perform those functions associated with his profession. As you know, I am not one of those fanatical fellows who have a lot of high falutin ideas concerning the priesthood, and that kind of thing. Still, I preach the Gospel and try to act in an exemplary way. I know I didn't get on with my late vicars,—I wasn't sufficiently clerical, and I didn't believe in their ritualistic practices. Was that why you couldn't recommend me ? ”

“ Let me put my question in another way,” said Nick, and glancing at his wife's face, he saw that it was very anxious. “ Would you mind telling me why you think the Church exists ? Is it for the purpose of offering a career to a number of fairly well educated men, or is it something else ? What lies at the back of it all ? What is the purpose of the Church ? Why did Jesus Christ come into the world ? ”

“ What do you mean, old man ? ”

“ I mean this. I am only an ordinary observer, whose lot has been cast in a busy Lancashire town. I am not going to speak of Ben's Cross in particular, but, as far as I can see, the Church is losing its hold. Don't mistake me. I'm not a goody-goody sort of chap but I can't close my eyes to facts. Directly after Miss Rashleigh came to see me, and as soon as I learnt that it was her intention to offer you the living, I went over to Gildershaw and made all sorts of inquiries.”

“ What did you learn ? ” asked David, eagerly.

“ I learnt that although there is a fine church there only a mere handful of people attend the services ; just a hundred or so ; and that the congregations, instead of increasing were diminishing. I was told that whereas twenty years ago three or four hundred people attended regularly, less than half that number attend now.”

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"Perhaps we shall be able to alter that," replied David, who had visions of an increasing congregation. "But the parish church is not the only place of worship. There must be others. What of them? Isn't Yorkshire a stronghold of Non-conformity? I have heard it spoken of as such."

"I believe it used to be," Nick replied; "but I am told that what is true of the parish church is largely true of all other places of worship in the town. That the churches of all sorts are less and less attracting the people; that not ten out of every hundred have anything to do with churches whatsoever. Especially is this true of the young people. They simply give a wide berth to the churches, and everything that has to do with religion. Judging from appearances, it would seem that the gospel which is believed in by the bulk of young men and women to-day is the *gospel of a good time*. Picture palaces are full; public-houses are full; dance-rooms are full, but the people give the churches a miss. Moreover, what is true of Gildershaw, seems to be more or less true of everywhere else."

"By jove, is that so? You are thinking of Lancashire and Yorkshire, of course; but surely it is not as bad as that?"

"I am afraid it is. Look here, David, old man, I wouldn't talk to you like this if you were a business man; but you are a parson; you are an ordained clergyman of the Church of England, and you have come here with the idea of learning all you can about a living which has been offered to you. The question with me is, are you fit for the job?"

"Do you doubt it?"

"Perhaps I do. Anyhow I will try and make my meaning plain. David, do you believe that religion is vitally necessary?"

"Of course I do. Why?"

"Because it is tremendously serious. Do you believe that it is essential to the well-being of the country? Do you believe

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that without it we shall, in every true sense of the word, drift to ruin ? ”

“ I hardly know what you are getting at, old chap. Of course I believe in the importance of Christianity, or I should not be a parson. Why do you ask such questions ? ”

“ Because, as far as I can see, organized religion is dying.”

“ Come now ! ”—interposed David. “ You don’t mean that.”

“ I am quoting what an important ecclesiastic said to me only a few days ago. ‘ Organized Christianity as far as the various churches are concerned is dying,’ he said, ‘ and unless the Almighty interposes, in another century it will have ceased to exist.’ ”

“ I know the churches are in a bad way,” replied David, “ but I don’t believe things are as bad as you suggest. In any case, what has all this to do with me ? I am offered this living, and I have come here in order to know whether it would be wise for me to accept it. If I do I shall jolly well do my best to make things hum. What can I say more ? ”

Nick Trebartha rose from his seat a little impatiently and began to pace the room. “ Look here, David,” he said, “ when I came to Ben’s Cross I had practically given up all religion. I believed that Christianity was a worn-out faith, a myth, which was useful in an ignorant age, but out of which all meaning had gone. Since I have been here, however, I have been brought up, as you might call it, right on my haunches. I have had to face things squarely, and I have had a tremendous experience.”

“ Yes, I heard about that,” and David Godolphin smiled a little superciliously. “ You have had a sort of revival here, but frankly, I don’t believe in revivals.”

“ Then, as it seems to me,” and Nick spoke emphatically, “ you had better go back to Cornwall and do some honest work as a miner or a brick-layer.”

“ What do you mean ? ”

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"I mean this : either religion is the greatest thing in the world, or it is the most shrivelled-up mockery ever invented. Either a clergyman's profession is the most magnificent and mighty thing that could be thought of, or it is the worn out relic of an ignorant age. The trouble is, whatever may be the state of things in Cornwall, in Lancashire and Yorkshire religion is becoming more and more a mere matter of convention ; as a consequence, the churches, as far as one can learn, are a played out force, and unless there is a revival of reality, and of spiritual power, they are nearly meaningless."

"You surely don't mean that ?"

"Perhaps I have gone too far," Nick confessed. "I have no doubt that there are many churches which are helping to keep the lamp of faith burning, but from what I can hear they are mostly mere pew-letting, collection-taking, money-raising institutions. As a consequence, they have very little influence on the life of the country. I am not sure, but in many cases it seems as though we should be just as well off without them as with them. And here is the ghastly fact. They are declining everywhere ; not one in ten of the population goes near them, while for anything like real influence on public life is concerned they are nearly dead."

"Then you advise me to refuse this offer ?" demanded David impatiently.

"It all depends. If you are contented to let things go on as they are, I should advise you to take up another job ; but if you mean business ; if you are determined to make religion a real factor in the life of Gildershaw, if you have made up your mind to make Christianity mean what Jesus Christ intended it to mean, then with all my heart I say, accept Miss Rashleigh's offer. But conventional Christianity is no good ; mere churchism, mere denominationalism is no good. The great thing wanted in Gildershaw is the Christianity of Christ, and nothing else will do."

"Nick has made me beastly uncomfortable, anyhow," David

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thought, as at a late hour he went to bed. "I wonder if there is any truth in what he says? Anyhow, I shall see the patroness of the living to-morrow. I suppose she is a vinegary old frump, and I almost dread meeting her. Still, it was sporting of her to offer me the living after what Nick said about me."

CHAPTER IV

WENTWORTH HALL

“**D**ID you sleep well, David ? ”
This was Naomi Trebartha’s greeting, as, late on the following morning, David Godolphin found his way downstairs.

“ When once I got off I slept like a log,” laughed David. “ But I was frightfully excited, and I heard a clock somewhere strike every hour until four. After that all was oblivion.”

“ It was too bad of Nick,” laughed the girl. “ I gave him a severe lecture after we went to bed.”

“ Not a bit of it,” David replied. “ He made me feel frightfully uncomfortable, but I have no doubt it was for my good. Nick is altogether different from what he used to be,” he added. “ Where is he, by the way ? ”

“ He went to Ben’s Cross early this morning, but he will be back by eleven o’clock at the latest. He generally breakfasts at half-past seven,” she added.

“ Leaving you to breakfast alone, I suppose ? ”

“ Oh ! no, I have mine with him. You don’t mind having yours alone, do you ? You see Nick and I had ours hours ago.”

“ I feel quite conscience-stricken,” laughed the young man. “ Fancy having one’s breakfast in the middle of the night like that, while now it is a quarter past ten. By jove ! this is splendid,” and he seated himself before a well appointed table.

He had scarcely finished breakfast when Nick appeared.

“ The top of the morning to you old man,” he cried with a

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heartily laugh. "You must excuse Naomi and myself for treating you like this, but I wanted to get through my correspondence early, so as to be free to go with you to Gildershaw. How are you feeling?"

"Dreadfully frightened."

"Frightened! In heaven's name, why?"

"Well, for one thing I couldn't sleep last night."

"Wasn't the bed comfortable?"

"The bed was perfect, but you knocked all the sleep out of me. You must confess that you were a bit disturbing. Besides, I'm frightened of meeting Miss Rashleigh, and I am dreading the catechism through which she will put me."

"Yes, she will catechise you all right," admitted Nick laughing, as he exchanged a meaning glance with Naomi.

"You said she was about sixty years of age, didn't you? Tall, gaunt and terrible."

"I didn't say a word about her," replied Nick; "but I can assure you she is a woman with a will of her own, and is determined to have her own way. She is a good deal of a martinet," he added.

"I can see myself undergoing the tortures of the inquisition," laughed David. "I can see her sitting in judgment upon me; still, I will face the music," and he shrugged his shoulders resignedly.

An hour later a car appeared at the door, and the three started their journey to Gildershaw. It was, for Lancashire, a bright morning, and as, in order to reach their destination, there was no need for them to pass through Ben's Cross, they escaped the smoky valley in which that town lay. Passing over the heights, however, they could see scores of mill chimneys belching out huge volumes of smoke, and filling the whole district with a grey haze.

"I hope Gildershaw isn't like that!" and David Godolphin gave a mock shudder as he looked.

"No," replied Nick. "I think I told you that Gildershaw

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was an important town before Ben's Cross was ever heard of. It is not properly a manufacturing town, either, although there is a great deal of business done there."

David became silent, as presently, after the car had passed through a somewhat bleak country, they entered more pastoral regions.

"Is that it?" he asked, looking towards a great square church tower which stood on a hill side in the distance.

Nick nodded.

"I dread meeting the old lady," David groaned.

"She may not be as bad as you think," Naomi laughed.

"She is very human."

"Do you know her well?"

"I used to," and the girl was on the point of blurting out the fact that they were at school together, but checked herself in time.

A few minutes later the car drew up before a pair of old-fashioned lodge gates, and having passed through them, they found themselves under a fine avenue of trees.

"This where she lives?"

Naomi nodded.

"The old lady does herself very well, anyhow," David reflected as they passed up the drive.

The reflection was natural. The road itself was weedless and perfectly kept, while it was evident from the grass verges which bordered the way, and the flowering shrubs which grew on either side of the road, that much care and labour had been spent on the place.

A minute later the car stopped suddenly, evidently owing to instructions the chauffeur had received. In a second David's eyes were fastened on a dark, stone mansion, which until now had been hidden by the foliage, but had suddenly sprung into view.

"That is Wentworth Hall," Nick informed him.

"By jove!" David could not help exclaiming.

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“Fine old place, isn’t it?”

David Godolphin didn’t reply, but sat gazing steadily at the house which had been the home of the Wentworths and the Rashleighs for hundreds of years. It was of Jacobean architecture, and was suggestive of the very spirit of age and restfulness. It was not unlike Mythamroyd, Nick’s home, but much larger, and David found himself thinking of Lanhydrock, one of the few stately homes of Cornwall.

“Does she live there?” he repeated. “By jove! I feel more nervous than ever,” and he began to picture a stately old dame, tall, with piercing basilisk eyes, overshadowed by forbidding eyebrows.

“Cheer up, old chap,” laughed Nick. “The devil’s not as black as he’s painted.”

“Liveried and powdered footmen, I suppose?”

“No, she won’t have them. I believe there are one or two men servants in the house, but she insists on having pretty girls to wait on her.”

The car having by this time reached the entrance door, the chauffeur descended and rang the bell; a few seconds later entrance was given to them by a grey-haired, portly old man.

“Miss Rashleigh is expecting you,” he informed them, as he led the way into the house.

“Naomi, you darling!” David heard a girlish voice saying a few seconds later. “It is good to see you! I was afraid you would not be able to manage it, from what you said; but this is just heavenly! Mr. Trebartha, you are of no importance now, so you can take a back seat; I am going to have another look at Naomi, so as to make sure you are treating her well. Don’t you regret having married him, my dear?”

“He is not so bad as that, Tammy,” laughed the girl. “Of course, it took me a few weeks to break him in, but now he toes the line beautifully.”

“I suppose this girl is Miss Rashleigh’s companion,” thought David. “By jove! she is pretty though; and she dresses

well, too. I expect the old lady will be here in a minute," and he looked nervously around the room.

"Oh! forgive me, Tammy," laughed Naomi, when she had given her friend another hug. "I ought to be ashamed of myself. This is the Rev. David Godolphin."

Quick as lightning a change passed over the girl's face; she was no longer a happy schoolgirl meeting an old friend, but a hard-eyed, critical, young lady. Indeed, as David Godolphin afterwards confessed, she seemed to read him through and through at a glance.

"And this," continued Naomi to David, and nodding towards her friend, "is Miss Tamsin Wentworth Rashleigh."

David was speechless, as with wide open eyes he gazed in astonishment at the girl before him. Forgetful of what was due to the patroness of the living which he so much desired, he continued to stare at her in bewilderment; then he gave vent, under his breath, to a very unclerical expletive.

"Nick, you blackguard!" he cried aloud.

"Is anything wrong?" asked Tamsin, a little wonderingly.

"I beg your pardon," David apologized. "I hardly know whether I am on my head or my heels. Nick made me believe that the patroness of the Gildershaw living, was a tall, gaunt, grisly, grey-haired, severe-looking old dowager, about seventy, and—and——"

"It's a lie!" denied Nick. "I refused to say a word about her."

"Well, that was the picture I had conjured up, anyhow, and I have been in a sort of purgatory during the whole journey here, dreading the ordeal through which I should have to be put," laughed David; "and now, instead of meeting a kind of Gorgon, I am brought face to face with a——"

"Yes," laughed Tamsin, "finish the sentence."

"But are you really the lady of whom John Blackburn, the lawyer, wrote? Is it you who offered me the living?"

"I instructed Mr. Blackburn to ask whether the Rev.

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David Godolphin, M.A., would be disposed to accept the living if it were offered to him," laughed Tamsin. "Are you he?"

"I am David Godolphin," he replied. "I have my Letters of Orders here ready for your examination. Forgive me for not wearing clerical attire, but I hate anything like labels; besides, I wanted to be incognito, and I mean to take a walk through the town this afternoon, but I should not like people to be staring at me, and pointing at me as the potential new rector."

"Certainly, you don't look very clerical," she said, continuing to look at him appraisingly.

Nevertheless, it was evident that David's appearance pleased her. As we said earlier in these pages, although he was not what might be called handsome, he was a happy, care-free, healthy-looking fellow, to whom anything like meanness or lies were abhorrent.

"I think I shall like you," Tamsin exclaimed, after a long examination.

"Good, I am *sure* I shall like you," retorted David, catching her spirit.

All of them burst into a hearty guffaw of laughter as he said this. Certainly the scene was not suggestive of a rector, who, for the first time, was meeting the patroness of the living which, as Nick Trebartha declared, was his for the taking.

"I don't know whether I shall be able to accept your offer, though, Miss Rashleigh," David said presently, and he spoke not only seriously, but earnestly.

"Not accept my offer! Why? Have you anything better in view? You have not seen the rectory yet," she added, "but I can assure you it is a fine old house, and——"

"It has nothing to do with that," David interrupted. "The truth is, Miss Rashleigh, my old friend, Nick here, frightened me last night. Please don't mistake me, and for heaven's sake don't be under any misapprehension about me. I am, in ordinary parlance, out of a job. I was ordained towards the end of the War, and offered myself as a chaplain, and——"

"Surely we need not go into all that now," interrupted Tamsin ; "lunch will be ready in twenty minutes, so we may as well talk of pleasant things before we come to the ostensible purpose of your coming."

"No, dash it all, I must have everything plain at the very outset," protested David. "I long to accept your generous offer, but I cannot stay here a minute longer under false pretences. I don't know if you are aware of it or not, Miss Rashleigh, but I am not successful as a parson. I did fairly well while I was in the Army, and I believe the boys liked me ; in fact I am sure they did ; but since then I am afraid I have made a mess of things. I've had to leave three parishes, because I could not get on with the vicars. I am not cast in an ecclesiastical mould, and I neither believed in their performances in church, nor in their doctrines. I told them so plainly, and although two of them, for my mother's sake, put up with me for as long as they could, they got rid of me as soon as they were able. And yet I was not altogether a failure. I believe the people liked me. They said they did anyhow, especially the young people. But there it was. Unfavourable reports were sent to the Bishop, and for more than two months I have been out of a job. Thus you see, when Mr. Blackburn's letter came to me, asking me whether I would like to come here, I felt as though some *Deus ex machina* had appeared on my behalf. It is true Nick Trebartha here sent me a very uninspiring letter, but I longed to come and see for myself. I have practically no private means, and although my mother has enough to live on, I cannot sponge on her. Now you see how matters stand. I should love to accept your offer, especially as I should be able to give a home to my mother, but I lay awake for hours last night wondering if I ought to take on the job. You see, Nick and I discussed the whole question, and he made me frightfully doubtful."

"Why ?"

"Because—well, he made me realize as never before the

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seriousness of the whole thing. Wouldn't you like to ask me any questions, Miss Rashleigh ? ”

“ Yes, I would, but I don't think they are the questions you expect to be asked.”

“ Let's have them anyhow.”

Tamsin Rashleigh hesitated a few seconds. Almost for the first time since the living had fallen vacant, she realized her position, and doubts came into her mind. After all, hers was a serious responsibility, and although as we have said in the opening of this story, she had not an atom of faith in what the Church stood for, she felt a kind of awe because of the position she held. After all, selecting a rector was not a light matter. Whoever she selected must have considerable influence in the parish. He would be looked up to on all hands, while his every word and movement would be noted and commented on.

But this was only for a moment ; after all, the whole thing was as meaningless as the story of Cinderella, and although old usages and customs must be complied with, they meant nothing as far as she was concerned.

Nevertheless, a kind of seriousness possessed her. She couldn't help being influenced by David's evident honesty, and she wanted to be as honest with him. It was true he was utterly unclerical, but the very fact that he had taken orders, and had come there for the purpose of obtaining information about the living, made her see something of the inwardness of the situation.

“ Please ask your questions,” said David. “ I shall not be happy until I have heard and answered them.”

“ Mr. Godolphin,” replied the girl, and her voice took on an earnestness which had hitherto been absent. “ I want to be as outspoken to you as you have been with me. I gather from what I have heard, that you not only expected me to be a prim and matronly old lady——”

“ No, I never thought of you as matronly,” interjected David, “ but I imagined you as stern and exacting.”

"Anyhow," replied the girl, "I am different from what you thought, as far as appearances and age go. I expect too, that I am different in another way. I dare say you thought I was a strong Churchwoman, and greatly interested in the rector's work."

"Yes, that is true," David assented.

"Well, I am not. I don't care a fig about Church work, and not only I don't care, but I don't believe in your profession. As you have been honest with me I will be honest with you. It is true I am the patroness of the living. That is a matter of accident. It so happens that the estate which fell to me at the death of my father, has always carried the gift of the living with it. Mr. Blackburn, when I consulted him about it, suggested that I should put the matter in the hands of the Bishop. I didn't. I don't believe much in him, and I don't like his attitude towards the church. You see, I have enough interest for that. He is what is called an Anglo-Catholic, and not only loves Roman ceremonial, but, so far as I can judge, believes in Roman doctrines. Whether I am right or wrong I don't know, but I hate anything like that. Priestcraft and Romanism, as far as I can see, always stand for mental slavery. You see the position, don't you?"

"Yes, I think I can see it," replied David. "By jove!—But do ask your questions."

The girl's words had taken him aback, and if the truth must be told, shocked him. Although he was essentially unclerical, he had a strong faith in Christianity, and he held his calling in reverence. Thus, when the patroness of the living frankly told him that she had not an atom of faith in what the Church stood for, he was startled.

"The questions I was going to ask you were these:—Do you play bridge; and are you good at the game? Do you ride to hounds? Are you fond of shooting? Do you dance; and are you fond of it? Have you any desire to interfere with folk's pleasures? But I don't think I will ask them."

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"Why not?" asked David with a laugh. "They are very reasonable ones."

"Yes, I know, but after your honesty and evident seriousness, they don't seem worth while."

"I will answer them, anyhow," replied the young man. "Yes, I do play bridge, and what is more I think I play a sound game. I am a fairly good horseman, but I don't ride to hounds simply because I cannot afford it. I am a fairly good shot, and I love shooting; as for interfering with other people's pleasures, I wouldn't do so for anything."

A silence fell upon the little party, and all realized that a new spirit had come into the conversation. Neither Nick Trebartha nor Naomi had spoken for several minutes, but each listened eagerly to what was being said. At that moment the lunch-bell sounded, and a new look came into Tamsin Rashleigh's eyes. She became a care-free, unconventional girl again.

"Not another word until lunch is over, Mr. Godolphin," she said. "Please don't expect any formality, and don't even hint at anything which has to do with your profession while we are eating. I hope you are hungry, Naomi. I am," whereupon she led the way into the dining-room.

Throughout lunch Tamsin Rashleigh and Naomi Trebartha wellnigh monopolized the conversation. They seemed to have a hundred things to say to each other about what had happened since their school days, and Tamsin made Naomi tell her experiences in the East. As for Nick, he watched David's face closely, and wondered what was passing through his mind. He could not help realizing that in some indefinable way David was different from what he had been the previous night. He saw that he had been startled by Tamsin's outspoken paganism, and wondered what effect it had had on him.

"Yes, Mr. Trebartha," said Tamsin, as the lunch came to an end. "I think on the whole you have treated Naomi

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fairly well, and perhaps in spite of my fearful prognostications about her marrying you, she might have done worse. She does not seem like a married woman at all."

"And never will," laughed Nick. "She is years younger than when I married her. She was a bundle of nerves then; now she is as healthy as a trout."

"Are trout healthy?" asked Tamsin demurely. "Anyhow, she looks jolly well, and so do you. As for Mr. Godolphin, he has been a regular ghoul at the feast. Don't look so miserable, my dear man;—for you *are* miserable! You must not think that because Naomi and I have been talking twenty to the dozen, that I have not been watching you."

"I can assure you, Miss Rashleigh, that——"

"No, don't answer me. You were about to utter some platitude, and I hate platitudes. Let's go into the library, and get all serious things off our chests right away. Then we can enjoy ourselves."

A few minutes later coffee was brought to them in a large room lined with books, and David made a pretence of drinking a cup.

"Look here," cried Tamsin. "You, Mr. Godolphin, have had no lunch worth calling. No, you haven't! I watched you while you were pretending to eat, and I knew all the time that you were bothered. You may not be much of a cleric, but you are conscientious, and you have been wondering what you ought to do. Well, I am going to make up your mind for you. I have offered you the living, and you are going to accept it. That is settled."

"Do you really think I ought to?" asked David.

"Of course you ought to. You are worth fifty of Mr. Whitecross, who was the rector here long before I was born."

"I am going to see the church and the town first, anyhow," said David. "And I am going to learn all there is to know. Will you come with me, Nick?"

"Delighted, old chap," replied his friend, who saw that in

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spite of the pleasantness of the surroundings, David Godolphin was passing through deep waters.

"The town is two miles away, won't you have a car?" asked Tamsin.

"You are awfully good," replied David. "But as I told you before, I don't want anyone to know who I am. The people will immediately think of me as the potential rector, if they see me in your car."

"Not the slightest fear of that," laughed the girl. "But have your own way. Don't hurry back," she added. "We shall be all right without you; but please remember that tea will be ready at half-past four."

"I seem like a man in a dream, Nick old man," exclaimed David, as they made their way towards the lodge gates.

"Why?"

"Everything is so different from what I thought."

"What do you think of Miss Rashleigh?" asked Nick.

"I hardly know yet."

"Don't think too much of what she says," Nick advised.

"She is only a harum scarum, irresponsible pagan."

"No, she is not," replied the other. "She is not irresponsible, and she is not a pagan."

"I can assure you she is. Naomi and she went to school together, and she was a problem to all the mistresses. She was constantly getting into scrapes."

"In what way?"

"Oh! from what I can gather she was always laughing at the minister's sermons, and that sort of thing. The school was in Scotland, and she went to the Scotch Church where the minister was very strong on doctrine. She was not only in the habit of laughing at his teaching, but declared that the Bible should be regarded as simply ancient literature. I suppose she was in the habit of pointing out discrepancies too, and was constantly putting posers to the mistresses."

"But she is not a pagan," persisted David. "I tell you,

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Nick old man, that girl is as much bothered as I am. I watched her face while I was telling her my own story, and she almost frightened me. She realizes the seriousness of her position almost as much as I am beginning to realize the position which faces me. It is all your fault, you rascal; but for your letter and our chat last night I should have taken on the job almost light-heartedly."

A few minutes later they stood beneath the shadow of the great church tower. - As David had been previously informed, it looked almost like a cathedral, and while not in the town it seemed to throw its shadow over the whole place. To David there was something awe-inspiring about it. It looked so grim and dark and imposing. Great gargoyles with hideously carved faces sprang out from the roof, and seemed to forbid all approach. The churchyard too, in the midst of which the old sanctuary stood, was neglected; the paths were weed grown, while great masses of decaying grass covered the graves.

David's heart sank like lead as he looked around him. It did not look like a God's Acre at all, while the church itself suggested a mausoleum rather than the spiritual home of living people.

"Evidently the patroness doesn't take much interest," he said like one musing.

"No, as I told you she is a pagan. I don't suppose after leaving school she ever entered the church. Indeed, she told Naomi that except for being there at her father's funeral, she has not been near it."

David did not reply to this. A fear almost amounting to terror had gripped his heart, and even more than on the previous night he felt the deeper meaning of the offer which had come to him.

And yet the thought of it was in many senses fascinating. The church was a fine one, while the idea of being rector of the parish appealed to him greatly. There was not a finer church

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in Yorkshire, Nick had told him, while the opportunities for doing good were tremendous.

"Let's go inside," he said, and there was a strange tensity in his voice as he spoke.

A minute later they found themselves inside the building, and David almost shuddered as he looked around him. This old church had stood there for nearly 400 years, while the ground on which it was built had for a thousand years or more been trodden by worshipping multitudes. The architecture, too, awed him, and he found himself reminded of Cologne Cathedral. Of course, it was not so fine as that world-renowned structure, but it was not unlike it. The Gothic arches tapering their way to the gloomy heights above them, the stained-glass windows portraying figures of Christ and His Mother, of the apostles and saints, and the old, grey, carved stone pulpit, all made him think of the great German church. There was a sense of spaciousness everywhere, and the wide sweep of oak pews, as well as the heavy stone walls gave him a sense of endurance. There was nothing tawdry, nothing which suggested cheapness in the whole place ; in that sense it was as it should be, a house erected to the worship of Almighty God.

And yet his heart became heavier and heavier ; everything seemed to suggest not life, but death. There was a musty smell in the air ; a something which made him think not of the beginning of life, but of the end.

"You said the church was not well attended," he remarked in a whisper to Nick.

"Only a scanty few," replied Nick. "When I was making inquiries about it I was told that a congregation of a hundred was quite an event."

"Let's get out," cried David presently. "I feel like a man being slowly crushed to the earth."

"We are close to the rectory here," Nick informed him, when they were again in the churchyard. "You will want to

go there, won't you ? ” and he led the way to a postern door in the near distance.

Directly they entered the rectory grounds everything became changed. The church and the churchyard suggested a home of death, but here were signs of life and activity.

“ By jove ! ” exclaimed Nick.

“ What is the matter, old man ? ”

“ A week ago this was as desolate and as uncared for as the churchyard, but evidently an army of gardeners have been here. She must have sent them down from the big house.”

“ Who is she ? ”

“ Miss Rashleigh of course. Pretty, isn't it ? ”

David looked around him, and his beauty-loving eyes appreciated all he saw. The lawns had been newly mown, the paths had been gravelled and trimmed, while the flower beds everywhere had been carefully tended.

“ That is the rectory,” Nick informed him, nodding towards a comfortable stone house in the near distance. “ Shall we try to find our way in ? ”

“ No,” replied David. “ I see a lot of workmen there, and they will get asking questions about us. It is a dear old house, though.”

“ Yes, it is big, too,” replied Nick. “ There is a story told in the town that one of the rectors married three times, and had six children by each wife. It was also said, that at Christmas time the old man insisted upon having all the eighteen at home together ! Just fancy ! ”

David was very silent as they walked through Gildershaw, and, though he was carefully observant of everything he saw while passing up and down the streets, he made no remark to his friend. He was evidently in deep thought.

There was nothing remarkable about the town ; it was typical of many others in that part of Yorkshire. The houses were nearly all of stone, and, in the main, covered by great grey slabs of slatey material. As far as David could see there was

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little or no poverty there. People seemed to be well dressed and well fed, while in the main street several shops gave evidence of prosperous business. Public-houses stood at nearly every street corner, while loafers seemed everywhere.

"Well, what do you think of it, David?" asked Nick presently.

"Bigger than I thought," replied David absent-mindedly.

"Yes, I am afraid I misinformed you about the size of the town; there are nearer twenty thousand people than fifteen."

Again they walked on, David with a far-away look in his eyes.

"Plenty of chapels," he remarked, as they passed a large building where the words "Congregational Church" were written on a notice board outside.

"Yes, all denominations are represented here. Baptists, Congregationalists, various kinds of Methodists. They are all here."

"They seem to have fine buildings."

"Yes, and I suppose nearly all those fine buildings are almost empty. The parish Church sets the pace for the rest, and from what I have heard, they have been getting emptier and emptier.

"By jove! what an opportunity!" David ejaculated.

"I wonder what he is thinking about," Nick reflected, but David's face gave no index to his thoughts.

Throughout the journey to Wentworth both of the young men were silent, but Nick who watched David's face, saw that there was an absorbed look in his eyes.

"Well," asked Nick, after they had left the town, climbed a long hill, and passed through the Wentworth park gates. "What do you think of it?"

Still David was silent. As they neared the house, however, a new look came into his face.

"Nick, old man," he said. "To-day is Thursday, isn't it? Can you put me up for a week?"

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“A week, my dear fellow ! A month, if you like. But what is in your mind ? ”

“I have a plan,” replied David, but he did not tell what it was.

At that moment, the two girls appeared at the front door of the great house. Both were laughing, and Tamsin had a Bible in her hand.

“‘And Joshua, son of Nun, sent out two men to spy secretly, saying, Go view the land, even Jericho,’ ” she read with mock solemnity. “What report do you bring, O spies ? ”

David’s face cleared as if by magic.

“The report we bring is that we are hungry. Are we too late for tea ? ” he laughed.

CHAPTER V

FACING REALITIES

NOT a serious word was spoken for several minutes. The girls plied the two young men with all sorts of ridiculous questions, while they, in return, gave answers which were just as ridiculous. They were, after all, in spite of the serious purpose for which David had come, two young men and two young girls. Presently, however, a more serious note was struck, and they found themselves arguing fiercely.

Naomi, whose only brother had been killed in the war, held strong views as to the futility of the League of Nations, and declared that war was the way to settle international difficulties, while Tamsin as strongly declared that all war was a crime and brought nothing in its train but degradation and ruin.

"See how everything has degenerated since the Great War," she exclaimed. "Hundreds of thousands of young fellows joined the Army in 1914 with great ideals, and a great faith in the future of mankind, and think what they have become."

"Yes, what have they become?" retorted Naomi.

"Degenerated," was the girl's reply. "As for women——"

"Yes, what of the women?" asked Nick, as she hesitated.

"Loud, immodest, and lacking in nearly everything womanly. The clock of the world has been put back during the last few years."

"Of course you don't mean that," said Nick, giving a quick glance at Naomi.

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"I do, really. I am quite serious," and her eyes showed that she meant what she said. "Have you read John Galsworthy's well-known books, Mr. Godolphin?"

"Which do you mean?" asked David.

"Those that have to do with the Forsyte family," replied Tamsin. "They almost made me sick as I read them. Think of that awful Fleur girl, and Marjorie Ferrar; and they, I suppose, represent modern life."

"I don't agree with you," said Naomi. "If you take John Galsworthy's picture as a true representation of the life in England, it was just as bad before the War as since. Think of the meanness which he describes in the Forsyte Saga; everything was just as bad at the end of the nineteenth century as now."

"No," replied Tamsin, "I admit that Galsworthy does not paint a bright picture of the times before the War, but they were infinitely better than those since. As far as one can judge, the War went far to kill everything good; respect for parents, virtue, and a hundred other things which go to make life bearable. I know you look upon me as an irresponsible person, but in spite of everything I am old-fashioned, and I hold to old-fashioned views. When I read those stories of Galsworthy, which describes Fleur, Marjorie Ferrar, and the rest of them, I almost despised my sex."

"Yes, but London society does not represent England," retorted Naomi. "There are no Fleurs in Gildershaw."

"There are, and that's what troubles me," replied the girl. "It is true that London society speaks a different language and in a sense lives in a different world, but at heart it is the same. What, in essence, is the difference between the young people of Gildershaw and those of London society? Fleur lived for self. Her gospel was 'the gospel of a good time.' Her creed was, 'I mean to move in a certain circle in society, and although I was not born in it I am going to get there.' As for anything else: truth, honour, modesty, virtue, it all

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goes by the board. Is not that in essence true of our girls in Gildershaw ? From what I can learn, the mill-owners' daughters and the shop-keepers' daughters talk as loosely, and think as loosely, as the girls in Galsworthy's pages. I tell you, the old virtues are dead, or if they are not dead they are fast dying."

"And what of religion ?" asked Nick.

"Religion !" ejaculated the girl. "There is practically no religion ; religion is almost dead."

"You don't mean that ?"

"I can't help meaning it. Why, think of Gildershaw. Dear old Mr. Whitecross used to complain to my father that the pews in the parish church were getting emptier and emptier, while the chapels were in the same condition. But that is not what troubles me. It's years since I believed in anything like religion, but the other——"

"At any rate, it is good to see you in a serious mood, Tammy," laughed Naomi. "You are generally as feather-pated as a comic opera."

"Oh, I have my serious moments, I can tell you," replied Tamsin. "One can't help being serious sometimes. Dancing and flirting are all very well in their way, but when one is brought bang up against some of the disturbing facts of life one has to face them. I may look at things in a superficial way, but I cannot help realizing that Gildershaw is not what it was. My father, who knew the town well, used to talk to me about the people's aims and purposes. He used to tell me, too, about the good relations which existed between master and work people ; but that is all gone, and I cannot help asking this : What sort of a town shall we have in the future ? What sort of fathers and mothers will the present young men and women be ? Oh yes, you laugh, but as I told you, I cannot help being serious sometimes, and I am really bothered. Home life is dying ; family life, as my father used to describe it to me, is nearly gone, while standards of morality as I used to think of them——"

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"Look here, Miss Rashleigh," broke in Nick, "I don't think you are altogether right. There is some truth in what you say, but the picture is not as black as you paint it. I don't see that Gildershaw is any worse than Ben's Cross used to be, if as bad, and even there we had heaps of people who were clean, fine, healthy folk. But if you are right, what is the cure for it?"

"What is the cure? Why, there is no cure."

"Yes, there is," replied Nick, and he gave a quick glance at David Godolphin, who had been listening attentively to everything that was said.

"What is it then? I should like to know."

"Jesus Christ," replied Nick, "and what is more, He is the only cure."

The girl shrugged her shoulders impatiently.

"What is the use of saying that, Mr. Trebartha?" she asked. "Christianity has had its chance, and it has failed. As you have just said, the Churches have little or no influence on the life of the town. Why, think of it," and she spoke a little impatiently, "Gildershaw is to all intents and purposes a pagan town. A few of the older people still profess to believe in Christianity, but even many of *them* make excuses for avoiding the churches. And what wonder! Why *should* one go to church? It is all barren and lifeless. I suppose it was believed in years ago, but there is no faith in it to-day. As for Jesus Christ, is it not a matter of doubt whether He ever lived at all?"

What Tamsin's purpose was in talking like this, I do not pretend to know. Perhaps it was to shock David. At any rate, he listened with eager ears, and was doubtless deeply affected by it. Her words seemed to him like a challenge, and although he could not have told why, he longed to take up the challenge.

"Are you serious when you say that Gildershaw is a pagan town?" he asked.

"I am afraid I am. Of course, old traditions don't die in a

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day, and perhaps it will take centuries before they are completely dead. All the same, from what I gather, the young people have in the main scarcely an atom of faith. Their creed seems to be that of the old Greeks : Let us eat, drink and be merry, for to-morrow we die. Old-fashioned morality is no longer believed in ; marriage is only a convention ; Sundays are given over to dancing and bridge parties. Of course, this is not as yet universal, but things are drifting that way."

"Nice cheerful talk by the patroness of the living," and although David laughed as he spoke, there was a serious look in his eyes.

"I want to be absolutely frank," replied the girl.

"And yet you have told me I must come here."

"Yes, I want you to come badly. I like you," said the girl. "I can see you are a good sort, and it will be pleasant to have a man at the rectory of whom one can make a friend. No, I don't care a hang about your profession ; that doesn't trouble me at all ; still, as the patroness of the living, I repeat my offer of it. You are just the kind of man I want to see at the rectory."

"I may turn out differently from what you think. I may prove to be troublesome."

"I will chance that," laughed the girl.

David looked at her intently. Yes, he could not help admitting it, she was good-looking, attractive, and indeed, in some respects fascinating. His previous conception of her as a tall, stately, grey-headed, grim, hide-bound Churchwoman had, of course, by this time departed. The young girl before him was the embodiment of youth and virility, and yet there was a suggestion of seriousness behind her surface flippancy, a something which told him that she did not mean half she had said.

"Would you mind telling me, Miss Rashleigh, what you think the future of Gildershaw, and for that matter all Yorkshire, will be ?" asked David.

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"Not a bit," laughed the girl. "I expect we shall become like France."

"But what then?"

"I spent a few weeks in Paris a short time ago, and had a jolly good time. Paris is given over to enjoyment and money-making; in short, it is irreligious; but it is none the worse for it. The people there don't trouble at all about morality or religious conventions. They live their own lives and enjoy themselves to their heart's content."

"But what then?"

"Life is short, so let's enjoy ourselves while we can," she spoke almost flippantly.

"I don't think I will come," said David.

"But you must come. Why do you say you won't?" she asked.

"I am afraid," he replied, and there was a something in his voice which showed that he meant it.

"Afraid of what?"

"I hardly know."

"Oh! of course, if you are a coward——" but she did not finish the sentence. At that moment a servant appeared, and went straight to her mistress.

"Mr. Grimshaw has called, please, Miss."

"Dick Grimshaw," laughed the girl; "show him in," but although she spoke lightly, a flush mounted to her face, and she looked a little nervous.

A minute later a young man was ushered into the room. He was about David's age, and his every look and movement suggested prosperity. He was thick-set and a little inclined to corpulence. A mat of straight, sandy hair covered his head, and he was more than a trifle freckled. He had fairly good features, although his somewhat heavy and square jaw suggested coarseness. Nevertheless, he was, on the whole, a well set-up and rather good-looking young fellow. His somewhat fleshy face was cleanly shaven, and he had evidently taken

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much care with his toilet. His light summer suit fitted him to perfection, while his hands were carefully manicured.

"Good afternoon, Tammy," he said, in a free and easy manner. "Am I too late for tea?"

"Not a bit," and the girl laughed excitedly. "I am afraid the tea has got cold though, but I will order some more. You know Mrs. Trebartha, don't you? She used to be Naomi Shuttleworth, and perhaps you've met her husband, Mr. Nick Trebartha."

"Delighted, I am sure," and he shook hands with the young couple.

He was typical of a certain class of Yorkshiremen, and there was a suggestion of the Yorkshire accent in his tones. He had all the Yorkshireman's strength, too. Anyone meeting him for the first time would not have associated him with anything like weakness. His square jaw, suggesting coarseness as it did, also suggested a grim determination which spoke of a man of dominant personality, and of one who would leave no stone unturned to get what he wanted. He did not look quite a gentleman, although he had spent three years at an ancient university.

Dick Grimshaw's grandfather had been spoken of years before as "th' owd Tommy Grimshaw," but he had made money rapidly. Being a far-sighted and keen-witted man, he had become a wealthy manufacturer, and when, just before his death, he had built a large flamboyant house not far away from Gildershaw, and called it "Gildershaw Towers," no one was surprised. There was a story still told in the district, that when the house was built he called in the aid of a firm of London decorators.

"What style of decoration would you prefer, sir?" asked the manager of this firm.

"Style!" repeated the old man. "I know nowt about style, but if there is ony place yo' can stick in a bit of gowd, stick it in."

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That story may not be true, and certainly his eldest son, the father of Dick, was not given to such expressions. This man, Richard Grimshaw, wanted to be taken for a country gentleman, and when his two children, Dick and Alice, were old enough, they were sent to fashionable schools. Dick on leaving school went on to Balliol College, Oxford. Later the young man had become a partner in his father's firm, and, while he drew a large income from that firm, he cultivated the habits of a country gentleman rather than those of the ordinary woollen-manufacturer.

Having spoken to Nick and Naomi, Dick Grimshaw turned towards David Godolphin, as if expecting an introduction.

"Godolphin," he repeated, when Tamsin had mentioned his name. "I have heard of the Godolphins somewhere. You come of a West country family, don't you?"

But David did not enlighten him. The truth was, he did not like Dick Grimshaw. Perhaps he had noted the air of proprietorship with which he had entered the room, and had also seen the flush which had mounted to Tamsin's face at the mention of his name. Anyhow, he felt a kind of antagonism towards him, and although he greeted him politely, was very noncommittal in his statements.

"My ostensible reason for calling, Tammy," remarked Grimshaw presently, "is to invite you over to the Towers on Sunday. That is Alice's express command, and I daren't go back home without being able to tell her of your consent. I know it is not your habit to go out much on Sundays, but you know what Alice is like; she has made up her mind, and you must come. She has only just come back from Scarborough," he added, "and whilst staying at an hotel there, she learnt a new dance, and insists on teaching it to the people she has invited."

"I don't think I have received a letter of invitation from Miss Grimshaw," Tamsin remarked, and there was a hint of hauteur in her tones.

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"No, it is not a formal business at all," Dick replied. "It is true, she has written letters to others, but she thought a letter mightn't fetch you, and so to make doubly sure, she insisted on my coming in person. It will be a free and easy affair," he added. "A sort of cold supper instead of ordinary dinner. Of course there will be some bridge for those who like it, and although old Jack Lister and Amos Huzzle, and people of that sort insist on playing for rather high stakes, you won't mind that, will you?"

Dick Grimshaw looked at Tamsin rather nervously as he spoke. The truth was he was not at all sure that she would accept the invitation, and he was exceedingly anxious to persuade her to do so. Up to the present Tamsin had kept somewhat aloof from the Grimshaws as a family, and it had been more than once hinted that it was because they did not belong to the same social circle. Although exceedingly rich, they were only on the fringe of what was called county society, and hence, in spite of the fact that Richard Grimshaw, Dick's father, was heard to declare more than once that he could buy up half the county families in Yorkshire, he was regarded as an outsider.

Dick, however, had met Tamsin on several occasions, and with the assurance of a certain class of Yorkshiremen had called her by her Christian name.

"Sunday is the only day on which some of the people Alice wants to come can manage it," went on Dick, "so, knowing your lax views about Sunday, she was sure you would make no bones about it. You *will* come, won't you? Remember it is purely informal. Alice only thought of it last Sunday, and when she mentioned it to me, I wanted to do the thing decently, but father and mother wouldn't hear of it. They are still tied to old-fashioned ideas, although they seldom go to church. You will come, won't you?"

Tamsin gave a quick glance at her visitors, especially at David. Their conversation seemed a curious commentary on

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what they had been talking about prior to Dick Grimshaw's appearance, and she felt slightly uncomfortable. She was anything but a snob, and was but little influenced by ordinary conventions ; more than that, bearing the name she did, she could afford to meet some of the nondescript people who were invited to Gildershaw Towers without fear of losing caste. For that matter, she boasted of being a radical. She had been heard to declare more than once that the old Yorkshire families were not only brainless but dull to boredom. All the same, she could not help noticing the peculiar look in David Godolphin's eyes. She knew nothing of his opinions on Sunday card-playing and gambling, for that matter she did not care, and yet she hesitated before she gave her reply. The truth was, Tamsin was a little annoyed that she had allowed Grimshaw to call her Tammy without protest ; and she had in common with Yorkshire people called him by his Christian name.

Dick Grimshaw, on the other hand, had decided on making Tamsin his wife. He had done this after careful consideration. Dick, like his father, was a young man of social ambitions. He knew that his people were "not quite of Tamsin's class," and he felt sure that by marrying her, he would have an entrée into houses that were now practically closed to him. Indeed, he had come to Wentworth that day, fully determined as he termed it, to fix it up. For he had not the slightest doubt as to Tamsin's acceptance. He had a very high opinion of Dick Grimshaw, and was fully assured that Tamsin was his for the asking. Moreover, as he had more than once declared to himself, he was "fair gone on her," and knew of no other girl that he would so much like for his wife.

Consequently, he was more than a little chagrined when he found that Tamsin had visitors ; especially was he displeased on seeing David. He was no fool, and although he would not own it even to himself, he instinctively felt that David belonged to a class apart from his own. As a consequence he

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disliked him, and felt a kind of antagonism towards him.

"I expect he is a religious kind of fellow," he reflected. "He is evidently friends with the Trebarthas, who are anything but my sort."

Consequently, he was, if possible, a little more blatant than usual. He assumed an attitude in which he was far from comfortable. He would let these aristocrats know that he was as good as they, he reflected, and that he was able to hold his own anywhere.

"You will come on Sunday, won't you, Tammy? For that matter you *must*," and his tone was even more assertive than usual.

Still Tamsin made no reply.

"We will have no end of a good time," he went on. "For although father and mother are just a little squeamish about doing the correct thing, neither Alice nor I are tied to our mother's apron strings."

This was true. Indeed, they were spoken of as young people who went the pace. Even Naomi Trebartha, who lived thirty miles away, had heard them alluded to as belonging to the fast set, and mingling with people who were "unconventional."

"I don't think I will," replied Tamsin quietly, after a long pause.

"But, damn it, you must," blurted out Dick. "Excuse the language, but really I cannot allow a refusal."

Quick as lightning Tamsin's eyes flashed not only towards the Trebarthas, but towards David. She felt instinctively that they were at the poles from the young Yorkshireman. She saw, too, that they were eagerly listening to every word that was being said.

Well, why should she pay any heed to them? Naomi Shuttleworth had always been regarded as a back number, even when they were at school together; while Nick Tre-

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bartha, the man she had married, was just a religious ninny. What did she care how Dick Grimshaw had impressed them. As for David Godolphin, it was just as well that he should know what her views really were.

With a kind of bravado, she turned towards Grimshaw smilingly.

"I won't promise," she said, "but I will see later how I feel."

"Oh! you will feel all right," and the young man spoke with the air of a conqueror. "Look here, I will come with the car myself and fetch you, and bring you home too. You won't be tied to time then, and we can have no end of a jolly pow-wow on our way back. I will see that no chauffeur is with us," he added with a laugh.

Grimshaw gave a quick glance at the others as he said this, and felt a kind of satisfaction at knowing that he had made them see how friendly he was with the owner of Wentworth.

"I must be going now," he went on. "You will come to the door with me, won't you, Tammy? There is just a word I would like to say to you alone."

Again Tamsin was annoyed. She hated the coarseness which was revealed by her visitor's every word. Nevertheless, she led the way to the hall almost before she was aware of what she was doing.

"Who is that fellow?" asked Dick.

"I thought you knew Mr. Nick Trebartha," she replied.

"I don't mean Trebartha, I mean the other bounder."

"I should call Mr. Godolphin anything but a bounder;" her manner was icily cold now, and she felt angry.

"I don't like him, anyhow, and I hope I shall never see him here again."

She resented this, and was on the point of telling him why he was there, but she refrained. After all, why should she tell Dick Grimshaw more about him. She had already allowed him a freedom which made her angry.

"I didn't know you had the right to dictate as to who my visitors should be," she replied. "Good afternoon."

"But—I say, Tammy," Dick began to protest.

"Good afternoon," she repeated. Then, seeing the old servant who had admitted her other visitors earlier in the day, she went on quietly, "You will see Mr. Grimshaw out, won't you, Pilkington?"

"You must stay to dinner, Naomi, my dear," she said with a return to her old manner as she re-entered the room.

"I am afraid we must go," replied Naomi. "I believe Nick has some business appointment to-night, and——"

But she did not finish the sentence. The maid-servant, who had announced Dick Grimshaw's visit, again appeared and spoke to her mistress in low tones.

"Don't go yet, anyhow," pleaded Tamsin. "I am afraid I must leave you now, but it shall only be for a minute. I expect it is of no importance, but the mother of my kitchen-maid says she wants to see me at once, so please excuse my rudeness."

She left the room as she spoke, and none of them imagined that the call of the kitchen-maid's mother would affect the life of David Godolphin. Yet so it was.

CHAPTER VI

DAVID'S DILEMMA

WHEN Tamsin Rashleigh again returned a few minutes later, she looked perturbed and anxious. "Nothing wrong I hope, Tammy," exclaimed Naomi.

Tamsin did not reply for a few seconds, instead, she went to the window and looked out over the wide-spreading park. There was a far-away look in her eyes, and David Godolphin saw that her lips were quivering.

"Tamsin, my dear," persisted Naomi, going towards her. "You haven't had bad news, have you?"

"Not in the way you think," replied the girl, "but it is beastly, simply beastly! Of course, it has nothing to do with me, and yet in a way I feel responsible. Mrs. Dixon feels it terribly too; no wonder—Yes, I may as well tell you," she went on, "indeed, I feel I must. Perhaps you can advise me."

David Godolphin continued to watch her, and it was a new Tamsin Rashleigh he saw. There was no longer the hard, defiant look in her eyes which he had seen during the time she had been talking to Grimshaw, but a plaintive tenderness which appealed to him strongly.

"What is it?" asked Naomi.

"Oh, it is a miserable, sordid business! It is on the lines of what we were talking about an hour ago." She hesitated a second, and then went on. "What I have to tell you strengthens the argument why you should come here, Mr. Godolphin."

David, still watching her, listened eagerly.

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“ Henry Dixon and Mrs. Dixon, who has just been to see me, have four daughters, one of whom is a kitchen-maid here. The cleverest of the four, Emily is her name, works in one of my factories ; she used to belong to the Congregational Sunday School. About a year ago this girl picked up with a young fellow who was one of my father’s chauffeurs. He is also a Gildershaw boy, and more than ordinarily clever. Indeed, he regards himself as what is now often called ‘ an intellectual.’ He reads the books of Karl Marx, and boasts of being a disciple of Lenin. Indeed, he declares that he is a Bolshevist, and that he has discarded old-fashioned notions. He is called Jim Brogden, and has quite a name in the town for being an advanced thinker. He laughs at the New Testament and at Christian ethics, and declares that there is no hope for England until religion is dead.”

She spoke slowly, and David could not help noting the new tone in her voice.

“ My father had to discharge him,” she went on. “ He was a good chauffeur, and a capable mechanic ; but he had a bad influence on the other men around the place. He was very immoral too, and his notions of sex were of the loosest. Anyhow, my father discharged him, whereupon he got a job at one of the factories in the town as an engineer. It is owned by the Grimshaws,” she added.

None of the others spoke a word, but they listened attentively to her story, and David thought he saw the direction in which it was drifting.

“ About the time Emily Dixon gave up attending the Congregational Sunday School,” went on Tamsin, “ she picked up with this fellow, Jim Brogden, and it was rumoured in the town that they were going to be married.”

Again the girl ceased speaking, while a peculiar look came into her eyes. Her voice had by this time become husky ; evidently she was deeply moved by the story she was telling.

“ And are they going to get married ? ” asked Naomi.

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"No," replied Tamsin, "and that is why the mother, Mrs. Dixon, is heart-broken. It appears that Emily Dixon, who used to be a religious girl, has now declared that all the New Testament teaching about marriage is so much nonsense, that religion puts a drag on the wheels of progress, and that she and Brogden are going to live together without troubling about marriage. Brogden, as I told you, is practically an atheist, and openly proclaims his Bolshevism in the Gildershaw market place. He is quite blatant about it, and boasts that he is not going to be tied down to the ethics of a worn-out religion, while the girl, who is enamoured of him, also declares that what is good enough for Jim is good enough for her. Just fancy it! This couple, Henry and Mary Dixon, who held up their heads as among the most respectable people in the town, are broken-hearted. It seems that Emily goes to public-houses with Brogden, and has more than once been seen the worse for drink. She laughs at her parents' nonsensical notions, as she calls them, and says that she is going to follow her own inclinations. She also declares that she is going to live with Brogden until they are tired of each other, when, if they feel so disposed, they will take other partners. It seems that Nelly Dixon, who is kitchen-maid here, believes that I may have some influence on her, and Mrs. Dixon has come here begging me to go and see her. But what can I do? In a way, although I don't know why I should, I do feel responsible for the girl. Oh, it is ghastly, positively ghastly! What shall I do, Mr. Godolphin? You are going to be rector here, and perhaps you can advise me."

"I don't know that I am," replied David. "I don't feel big enough for the job."

"Oh, but you must, you must!" asserted the girl. "Already I feel I can speak more plainly to you than to anyone else. Promise me you will."

Evidently she was deeply moved. There was an eager and almost plaintive tone in her voice, and a look in her eyes which

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to David seemed beseeching. Whatever might be her opinions generally, and however lightly she might think of religion, she held to the best traditions of old families concerning her duties towards her dependents.

"You see, I have no one to advise me," she went on. "Father has gone from me, Mr. Whitecross is dead, and there is no one to whom I can go. Oh, you must come, Mr. Godolphin!"

For the first time since he had come North, David understood something of Nick Trebartha's feelings with regard to the duties of a clergyman. Hitherto, while he had been an honest and sincere sort of fellow, he had looked upon his calling in the light of a profession, and as little else. He called to mind his experiences in the Army, as well as his relations with his vicars, and what did they all amount to? As far as his work in the Army was concerned, he had tried to be jolly and friendly with the boys with whom he came into contact. He was great at smoking concerts, took part in their boxing matches, and performed in a perfunctory way his duties as a chaplain. But he scarcely realized the inwardness of his work; for that matter, many of the things he had been taught to believe as a boy had been shattered by his Army experiences. As for his later work, work in quiet, Cornish parishes, it all seemed a long way off. After all, what did it all amount to? What did he care about the ritual on which his vicars had laid so much stress. It seemed to him that they regarded religion largely as a matter of orders, vestments, and sacraments. Nothing ever went down to the roots of life.

But here was something different. Here was a girl in danger of being dragged to the devil; here was a man who was dragging her there; here was a town in which religion was dying; here was a parish which needed something vital, something—he hardly knew what.

And he had been asked to become rector of this parish, and he realized as never before what being rector meant. He

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realized that the town was seething with revolutionary thought. He saw thousands of young men and women who were drifting away from old faiths, old conventions, and he saw too that they were at the same time surrounded by all manner of temptations.

What message had he to give such a town? What gospel had he to proclaim to a tempted, anxious, sorrowing, struggling community of men and women? What advice had he to give in relation to the girl's story he had just heard? He felt that it was probably only one of hundreds of similar stories, and if he accepted the offer which had been made to him, he would be brought face to face with a life of which he knew nothing.

"You will come, won't you, Mr. Godolphin?" and her words sounded like a command.

David was silent. He could not, he simply *could* not answer her question. He was like a man struck dumb.

"And please tell me what to do about Emily Dixon. You see, her sister is a servant here in the house, while not only Emily but her father work at one of my factories. In a way I feel responsible for them, and yet what can I do?"

"You can at least go to her and speak to her kindly," he said.

"Yes, but what can I say to her?"

"Make her feel the sin of what she is tempted to do," he replied almost savagely.

"But is it sin? After all, isn't the girl right? Why should something uttered nineteen hundred years ago be binding to-day?—Oh, I apologize! I hardly know what I am saying. I feel so bewildered, so helpless. You will come, won't you, Mr. Godolphin?" and again he caught the plaintive tones in her voice.

"Give me a week," he replied. "I want to think it out again in the light of what I have seen and heard to-day. I want to——"

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He started to his feet, and for a few seconds paced the room like a man in wrath, then he turned towards Nick Trebartha.

"Nick," he said, and his voice was almost husky. "Can we go back to Mythamroyd? I know I am awfully rude, but I want to be alone. I want to get to the bottom of things. I want to—— Good-bye, Miss Rashleigh," and he held out his hand. "I am afraid you will think me an awful boor, but I am no end obliged to you for all—your goodness."

He left the room as he spoke, and going to the cloak-room, began to fumble among the garments there for his overcoat and hat.

"Don't judge him harshly, Miss Rashleigh," Nick said as he watched him go. "He is one of the best fellows who ever lived, but as you see, he is bothered. I am glad of it," he added.

"Why should you be?" asked the girl.

"Because he is brought up on his haunches; because he is facing his job as he never faced it before."

"Do you think he will accept my offer?"

"I don't know. If he doesn't, he will give up parsoning altogether; but if he does——"

"Yes, if he does," queried the girl, as Nick hesitated.

"I think he will make things hum at Gildershaw," replied Nick. "I have known him more or less intimately all my life. We were at Harrow together, and I saw something of him during the War. He is a strange mixture," he added.

"What do you mean by that?"

"In a way, he is a happy-go-lucky sort of a fellow, and sometimes does things without much thought; but once roused, he ceases to be happy-go-lucky. He took orders to please his mother, and I verily believe that, up to now, he never realized what being a parson meant. To him it was just a profession, and nothing more, but now——"

"Yes, now?" queried the girl.

"He will go to the bottom of the whole business," replied

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Nick. "I watched his face while we were at the church this afternoon, and while we went through the town. He said very little, but I could see that he was thinking hard. David is a chap with a conscience, Miss Rashleigh, and we have roused his conscience. He is thinking whether he *ought* to come." Nick nodded towards the window as he spoke, and the others looking out, saw David tramping the lawn outside, and each judged by the far-away look in his eyes, that he scarcely knew where he was.

"He was very rude," and Tamsin spoke the words angrily.

"He didn't mean to be," Nick apologized for his friend. "There is not, really, a more courteous fellow alive than David Godolphin; but I tell you this, nothing will move him when he has made up his mind."

"Then if he makes up his mind not to come——"

"He won't come," said Nick, "and nothing will persuade him to come."

"I say, Tammy," broke in Naomi. "You won't go to those Grimshaws on Sunday, will you?"

"Of course I shall; why not?" and there was defiance in the girl's voice.

"Because," and Naomi yielded to the impulse of the moment, "he is such a bounder, and so is his sister."

"Be careful, Naomi;" there was a curious intonation in Tamsin's voice.

"Why should I be careful?"

"Because it is possible I shall soon become Mrs. Dick Grimshaw."

"You can't mean that, Tammy!"

"And if I do?"

"But you can't! you can't! It would be just awful!"

Half-an-hour later Tamsin Rashleigh sat alone in the great house. Nothing particular had seemed to have happened, yet to the girl the air seemed to be electric, and she found herself excited by the events of the day. And yet what, after all,

had taken place? She had received a visit from an old school-friend and her husband, who had brought with them a man to whom she had offered the living of Gildershaw. There seemed nothing in that to interest her very much; yet she *was* interested, greatly interested. In a way, she did not much care whether David Godolphin came as rector or not. She knew very little of him; she had given up whatever little interest she had in religion years before, and she had no faith in his profession; yet she found herself hoping that he would come. Indeed, she was anxious that he should come. But why should she be? It was true she liked him; liked him because he was evidently a gentleman, and more because of the honest look in his eyes; but she had no special interest in him.

Why then should she feel that the atmosphere was electric? Why should she feel that there was something like destiny in the day?— She was glad she had told Naomi Trebartha that she intended going to Gildershaw Towers on the following Sunday afternoon; and yet, was she? Did she mean what she said when she told Naomi that she would possibly marry Dick Grimshaw? She laughed as she remembered the look of consternation on Naomi's face, and the horror in her voice. Anyhow, she had enjoyed their visit. Life, in spite of the fact that she travelled a good deal and had a number of visitors at Wentworth, was a bit monotonous. . . . What should she say to Emily Dixon's mother? What should she say to the girl herself? For that matter why should she bother at all? She wasn't responsible for the doings of the people who worked for her.

She sat for a long time looking out of the window where she had seen David Godolphin striding up and down like a man struggling with some big thought; then, going to a desk, she seized a pen and wrote rapidly:

“ I find that after all I cannot come to Gildershaw Towers

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on Sunday afternoon, owing to another engagement. Please thank your sister for me for inviting me, but it is utterly impossible. With kind regards to your father and mother.

Yours sincerely,
TAMSIN WENTWORTH RASHLEIGH."

She folded the sheet of paper, and placing it in an envelope addressed it to :

Richard Grimshaw, Esq., Jr.,
Gildershaw Towers.

Then throwing the letter on the desk, she looked at it steadily like one in doubt.

Tamsin Rashleigh dined alone that night. That did not often happen, as she generally either went out or arranged for friends to dine with her. Perhaps the reason of her being alone was the fact that she hoped Naomi and the others would stay to dinner.

David Godolphin was silent during the greater part of their journey from Wentworth to Ben's Cross that evening ; for that matter, he seemed utterly oblivious of time and place, and it was not until they neared Ben's Cross that he took any interest in the surroundings. They passed through striking and varied scenery, but he saw nothing of it. In his eyes was a vacant stare, while his lips were set and firm.

"What do you think of Miss Rashleigh, David ?" asked Nick, as the smoky valley in which Ben's Cross stood appeared to view.

David did not reply.

"I say, old man, wake up ! What did you think of Miss Rashleigh ?"

"Eh ? What ? Oh, I thought she was an attractive girl."

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“ Only that ? ”

“ What else was there to think of ? ”

“ Are you going to accept Miss Rashleigh’s offer ? ”

“ I don’t know. I don’t think so.”

“ Why ? ”

“ I am afraid, old chap ; positively I am afraid.”

“ Afraid of what ? ” and Nick eyed his friend closely.

“ Of two things, old man. They have been haunting me all the way back.”

“ Yes, and what are they ? ”

“ Really, I suppose, they mean one and the same thing. Is there anything in the religion I am supposed to preach that will save the town ;—that will save a girl like Emily Dixon and that chap Jim Brogden ? Does it mean anything, really ? And the other thing which has the same significance is this : Do I really believe in Jesus Christ ? Do I really believe in the things that are printed in the New Testament ? It is a tremendous question. By God, it is a tremendous question ! ”

“ Well, don’t you ? ”

David did not reply for more than a minute, then he burst out :

“ Yes, I *think* I do. But am I *sure* ? That is the heart and essence of the whole matter. It seems to me that the Church, that parsons, generally, are a failure, because they are sure of nothing. Good heavens ! what are the things which our chaps are striving and fighting for really worth ? After all, what does it matter what kind of church or chapel people go to ? What does it signify ? What does it matter what kind of vestments parsons wear, and all that sort of thing ? Jesus never troubled about it. For that matter it is clear as day, that they are merely the relics of the old pagan ceremonials which were practised long before Jesus was born. He never cared about them. Why, compare the glorious life of Jesus ; compare the tremendous teachings He gave to the world, with the flimsy, gaudy, tawdry ceremonials which our chaps are

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fighting about. It won't bear thinking about, old chap. One has to get away from these things—to get deeper. And that is where I am in a trough. Paul said : 'I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation.' It was a tremendous thing to say, and it lies at the heart of everything. Do I really believe it ? Am I really *sure* of it ? ”

A little later David had apparently forgotten the questions which had haunted him during the journey. No sooner did he set foot in Mythamroyd, than to all appearances he did not seem to have a care in the world. He told funny stories ; chaffed Nick unmercifully about his boyish flirtations ; asked Naomi all sorts of absurd questions as to what Nick said when he proposed to her ; and presently when the Rev. Arthur Bolitho, vicar of St. Michaels, dropped in for a friendly visit, eagerly joined in a game of bridge.

“How much a hundred shall we play for ? ” he laughed, as the four took their seats at the card-table.

“I never play for money,” replied Nick.

“Neither do I,” asserted Bolitho.

“Why ? There is no harm in it.”

“No, perhaps not, but the spirit of gambling has so laid hold of our young men and women of Lancashire, that I cannot help setting my face against the very suggestion of it,” replied Arthur Bolitho. “It is not because I am a parson that I object to it ; for that matter, I dare say I should play a much better game if there were a stake in question. But as Philip Snowden says, gambling has so laid its strangle-hold upon the young life of Lancashire, and it is cursing so many thousands, that I feel I can't countenance it.”

“All right,” said David. “I don't trouble one way or the other, for that matter I never gave it a serious thought.”

A few minutes later they were all so interested in the game that all conversation ceased. But after a while, when Naomi happened to be dummy, a servant came in and whispered

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something in her mistress's ear. She got up from the table with a glad look in her eyes, and rushed out of the room.

"Yes, Tammy, you darling, what is it?" she exclaimed, as she took hold of the telephone receiver.

"How do you know it is Tammy, my darling?" she heard a laughing voice rejoin.

"Because of the music of your voice. Now, what is it? I am eager to know. Has anything happened since we left Wentworth?"

"Yes—no, I don't know. Naomi, will you please invite me to spend next Sunday with you at Mythamroyd? I can get over for lunch."

"Do you mean it? Will you come? That's glorious! You will stay the day, won't you? We don't have dinner on Sunday nights; we dine in the middle of the day and have supper at night, so that the servants can go to church or chapel."

"I will stay to supper gladly," rejoined Tamsin. "That's settled then, and I will be over just before one o'clock. Kiss me, will you? I shan't be able to feel it, but I shall hear it."

A great deal of chaffing and laughter followed this, and when Naomi returned to her place at the bridge table, she looked very happy.

"What has happened, old girl?" asked Nick.

"Tamsin Rashleigh is coming over here on Sunday to spend the day," replied his wife. "She has just telephoned asking if she may come."

"Good! Then she doesn't mean to go to——?"

"No; splendid, isn't it? There is a good deal behind that, Nick."

If David Godolphin heard that conversation, he showed no signs of it; instead he was examining his cards as though nothing else in the world was worth thinking about.

"Nick," exclaimed David presently, when Arthur Bolitho

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had gone, and they were all seated around the fire in the library. "You have a two-seater car, haven't you?"

Nick informed him that he had.

"Will you lend it to me early on Sunday morning, and let me keep it for the day?"

"Of course I will; but didn't you hear what Naomi said? Tamsin Rashleigh is coming here on Sunday."

"Is she? Well, that doesn't matter. I want to go to Gildershaw."

"To Gildershaw! Again?"

"Yes, I want to see the place on a Sunday."

"But couldn't you postpone your visit until Monday or Tuesday? Tamsin will be disappointed at not seeing you."

"No, I want to see the place on a Sunday; no other day will do. As for Miss Rashleigh, she won't know whether I am here or not."

CHAPTER VII

GILDERSHAW

EARLY on the following Sunday morning, David Godolphin got out the car Nick had lent him, and drove to Gildershaw. He did not take a chauffeur with him ; he would rather drive himself, he said ; it would leave him freer to do what he wanted to do.

"I feel a howling swell," he said as he took his seat. "I was never rich enough to possess a car of my own, although ever since I was a boy I have been mad to have one. As you know, while I was at the Front I toured up and down more than fifty miles of our lines in an Army car, and although I ses it as shouldn't, what there is to know about a car which I don't know, isn't knowledge," and he laughed whimsically. "If I don't keep on parsoning I think I shall turn chauffeur."

"Don't break the speed limit, anyhow," chaffed his friend.

"Speed limit !" laughed David. "In three-quarters of an hour after I start, I am going to be in Gildershaw, speed limit or no speed limit."

Nick did not ask his friend his purpose in returning so soon to the town he had so lately visited, and although nothing had been said further concerning David's purpose in coming North, Nick knew that he was passing through deep waters. Often when they had been discussing things far removed from David's profession, his mind had evidently been full of Gildershaw. More than once too, Nick had heard his friend tramping to and fro in his bedroom when he ought to have been asleep.

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It was only a little after nine o'clock when David reached Gildershaw that Sunday morning. Having discovered a little garage about half a mile out of the town, he parked the car there, and then wandered, seemingly aimlessly around the town. Presently, just before half-past ten, he found his way to a spot near two of the largest Nonconformist churches in the town, and watched while the congregations assembled. Directly after eleven he made his way to the Parish Church. It was here his chief interest lay. Entering the old sanctuary, he occupied a seat which commanded a view of the whole building, where at the same time he would be little noticed. It was a grey, windless morning, and while there were no signs of rain, there was no enticement to stay out of doors. And yet the church was nearly empty. Besides the choir boys, not more than fifty people were present; the great waste of oak pews was practically unoccupied. Perhaps the congregation assembled that morning did not give a fair idea of the numbers which ordinarily gathered there; David remembered that the rector was dead, that the service was conducted by a *locum tenens* and that consequently there was little to attract. Yet he felt that his heart was heavy, and he asked himself again and again why people *should* come there. It seemed to him only the repetition of a form, out of which nearly all meaning had gone. Prayers were intoned, hymns were sung, psalms were chanted, and yet there seemed no life or reality in anything. The people were reverent enough, and evidently followed the services with intelligence, but everything lacked the breath of life.

The officiating clergyman felt this, David thought. He seemed nervous and irritated, if not angry; perhaps there was little wonder. Beyond the choir boys there was scarcely any youth in the Church. Young men were conspicuous by their absence, while only a few young women, mainly, as far as he could judge, of the servant class, were present.

David tried to understand the meaning of this as he watched.

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No one seemed to take any notice of him ; he was simply a strange man wearing a brown knickerbocker suit of Harris tweeds, and, though strangers were seldom seen there, he attracted little attention. He did his best to hide his face from the few who were in a position to see it.

“What is the meaning of it ?” he asked of himself. “There were crowds of people in the town ; why don’t they come here ? And that Wesleyan Chapel as well as the Congregational Chapel were just as empty, just as lifeless. Why doesn’t this stately and beautiful service of the Church of England appeal to people ? If ever there was a fine literary production, it is this prayer book, and yet it doesn’t seem to count. What is wrong ?”

A little later, however, his interest was aroused ; he saw the *locum tenens* find his way to the pulpit with a sad look upon his face as if determined to get something off his chest. Having given out his text, he made a few remarks about the new rector, who had not yet been appointed, but who, he hoped would breathe new life, from the Church standpoint, into the town.

“I have been wondering lately,” he said, as he looked around the great building, “why this church is not full of worshipping people. It is one of the finest churches in Yorkshire. Its history goes far back into the past—even before what is called the Reformation, when the church was torn asunder and when this great space was thronged by sincere and worshipping people, and I ask myself why is it not so now ?”

He was not pleasant-looking, this preacher. His face was pale and cadaverous ; his hands were large and bony, while his whole appearance repelled rather than attracted. And yet the potential rector listened like one spell-bound. This man was asking a question which had troubled him, and for which he wanted an answer.

“So that is his solution to the problem,” David reflected later,

as he found his way out of the church. "To him the Reformation was a mistake, and we must get back to the darkness of the Middle Ages in order to have faith. Evidently, he is one of those Anglo-Catholics, who are so rampant now-a-days. But where does it lead to? No, no, that won't do. I have been through all that, and it does not touch the heart of the thing at all."

He wandered away from the church until he found himself in some woods, which had evidently belonged to the Wentworths. Here he ate the sandwiches which he had asked Naomi to have prepared for him, and reflected on what he had seen and heard.

Later still, he climbed a craggy peak in the near distance, from which he could see not only the town of Gildershaw, but the home of Tamsin Rashleigh.

"It does seem anomalous after all," he reflected, "that the church living should be the gift of one who has no faith in, and cares nothing about, such matters. But there, these anomalies are fast dying out, and they will soon disappear."

He could not, as he looked at the great house embowered by trees, help thinking of his visit there. No, Tamsin Rashleigh, in spite of her somewhat flippant protestations, was not irreligious. The girl was passing through a curious phase in her life, even as he was. It was quite a caprice on her part to offer the living to him. She would never have thought of him had she not in a round-about way been brought into contact with Nick Trebartha. . . .

What a change had come over Nick! He remembered how Nick in the old days had practically discarded the Christian faith, and yet he was now not only a firm believer, but regarded that faith as the only hope for the world. Well, perhaps it was no wonder. That story which Nick had told him about the change which had come over Ben's Cross, and the tremendous influence which had somehow been exerted during the strike there, could not be easily explained. Of one thing

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he was certain, either Christianity was the most tremendous thing in the world, or it was only a worn out myth which had had its day. . . .

Was Tamsin Rashleigh going to marry that Grimshaw fellow ? It would be an awful pity if she did. They lived in different worlds, spoke different languages, and yet——

Looking at his watch, he made his way to the town again. Yes, as far as he could see, the people, in the main, were well fed, well clothed, and comfortably housed. They appeared to have plenty of money too.

Looking, he saw a number of charabancs drawn up in a line by the side of a street, at a little distance from a large public-house. The destinations of these charabancs were plainly indicated. Some were going to Scarborough, others to Whitby, others to the Yorkshire Moors, while still others were labelled Fountains Abbey, and Bolton Woods. Evidently the people were all bent on pleasure.

He watched while they made their way to their seats. Mostly they were young, although a number of elderly people helped to fill the vehicles. They were, in the main, very gay, very hilarious, and bent on enjoying themselves. Rough jests were passed, and a great deal of typical Yorkshire humour was indulged in. Well, why shouldn't they ? David reflected, as he watched the people crowd into the conveyances. They had money to spend, why shouldn't they enjoy themselves ?

But the scene did not suggest an old-fashioned English Sunday at all. There was no suggestion of the quiet restfulness which he had learnt to associate with the Sabbath day. It reminded him rather of the Sundays he had spent in Paris, and of the scenes he had witnessed in the Champs-Élysées.

He watched as some of the charabancs moved away, and reflected that motor-cars had practically annihilated space, and revolutionized methods of transit. He heard nothing,

saw nothing wrong, and yet he wondered whether the people were better or worse for the abolition of the old-fashioned ways. And yet in Heaven's name, why shouldn't Sundays be a day of merriment, carousal, and enjoyment? The word holiday was of course a corruption of the words Holy Day. Was the world better when the people kept Holy Day, than they were now when they simply regarded Sunday as a holiday, a day of pleasure, a day of carousal?

"Coom, Harry, tha'rt laate. We wur just off without thee."

This was said to a young man and woman who were rushing to one of the charabancs.

"Ay, weel, I got up laate this morning; not until one o'clock i'fact. I wur on t'spree last night."

"So wur we," shouted half a dozen others. "But we wur noan laate for this."

"I made my missis bring breakfast to me i'bed at eleven o'clock," shouted another.

"Art 'a takin' the missis to-day?" asked another.

"Nay, I'm baan to enjoy mysen, so I left her home."

There was great laughter at this, especially as some of the others expressed themselves in a similar way.

"I doant believe in takin' my missis on doos like this," shouted one, "I like to pick up a lass wherever I go."

"My missis has gone off with another chap," shouted another amidst a great guffaw of laughter.

"And who is going to mind the kids?" someone asked.

"Ay, they mun mind theirsens," was the reply.

Possibly there was but little meaning in all this, nevertheless, David was saddened. The very fact that they should talk so lightly about such matters, and find enjoyment that way, seemed to him indicative of a loosening of morals.

Presently, he found himself standing before the Congregational church. This place particularly interested him, because of the conversation he had heard a few days before about

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Emily Dixon. Standing by the side of the church were the Sunday school buildings. He determined to go in, and a few minutes later found himself talking to the superintendent.

"You seem to have a good Sunday school here," he remarked.

"Not so bad," was the reply. "I reckon it is the best in the town, although the Wesleyans have nearly as many scholars."

"How many scholars have you?"

"Nearly four hundred on the books," he replied.

"Surely there is not that number here."

"Nay, the real attendance is nothing like it used to be. For that matter, Sunday schools are nothing like they were. When I was a boy, we had eight hundred scholars on our books, and a great percentage of these attended regularly. We had a Bible class of seventy men, too, but those days are gone," he added with a sigh. "And the worst of it is, that it is the same all over the town. Young men in the main, don't go to Bible classes now, nor young women either for that matter. It is all pleasure now. You are a stranger to the town, I fancy?" and he looked at David questioningly.

"I saw a number of charabancs just now; they were just starting for various places in Yorkshire. They all seemed well filled."

"Ay," replied the Yorkshireman, "going off on Sunday jaunts is fast taking the place of Sunday schools. All the old ideas about keeping the Sabbath are dead."

"And is all this affecting the morals of the town?" he asked presently.

"I am afraid it is," was the reply. "Of course I hold that Gildershaw is not worse than any other place in Yorkshire; in fact, I don't think it is; but the old life has gone, and old ideas are gone too. I don't think there is as much drinking here as there was, although lots of those people who are gone on the charabancs have taken their bottles of whisky and beer with

them, and very likely when they return home late to-night, a good number of them will be the worse for it. All the same, I don't think there is as much drinking as there was. That may be because drink is so much dearer, but as for other things, we are steadily going down the hill. Marriage represents something which may be lightly thought about. Unfaithfulness is not regarded as it used to be, while many of these chaps who write novels seem to think their books cannot be interesting unless they deal with unsavoury subjects. By the way, did I see you looking in at our chapel this morning ? ”

“ It's quite possible,” replied David.

“ We have a beautiful church, and a grand minister too, but you saw, I expect, that there were very few people there.”

David nodded.

“ It is the same all over the town,” the Yorkshireman informed him.

“ And is the town the worse for it ? ”

“ Of course it is,” replied the Yorkshireman solemnly. “ As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he ; and as the young people of the town think in their hearts, so are they. I wonder sometimes what we are coming to,” he added. “ Don't mistake me mister, there is a lot of good in Gildershaw yet, and the people are, on the whole, well disposed and kindly ; but it seems to me that there is a *lowering of standards*. In the old days people used to find their interests in the church, now they find it elsewhere.”

“ Is there anything in the churches to attract the people ? ” asked David.

The Yorkshireman shook his head.

“ I am afraid there is not much,” was his reply. “ There seems to be no certainty, no conviction, no vitality. Do you ever drive a motor car, mister ? ”

“ Yes,” replied David with a smile.

“ So do I,” replied the Yorkshireman. “ Mine gave me an illustration the other day of the condition of our churches.

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I took my car out for a run, and she went very well for several miles, and then suddenly stopped. I am a bit of a mechanic, but I could find nothing wrong with her. All the machinery was perfect, and she was well oiled, well greased, and I did not see much wrong anywhere. Presently, I found out what was the matter. The dynamo had become disconnected, and as a consequence, there was what you may call no dynamic, no power. As soon as I made the connexion again she went like the wind. That is what is the matter with the churches. We have perfect machinery, splendid church accommodation, good organization, in fact everything ; but we lack dynamic."

The superintendent's attention was attracted elsewhere just then, and David left the school.

His conversation with the Yorkshireman gave him a good deal of food for reflection, and so deeply was he interested in what had been said, that he gave a start when he heard his own name mentioned.

"What in the world are you doing here, Mr. Godolphin ? I thought you were staying with the Trebarthas ?"

Turning, David saw that a two-seater car was drawn up at his side, and at the wheel sat Dick Grimshaw.

"I am interested in old towns," he replied, "and I should judge that Gildershaw is one of the best examples of an old-fashioned Yorkshire market town."

"Deadly hole," responded Dick. "Of course, there is nice country around it, but give me Leeds or better still London. Are you alone ?" he added.

"Yes," replied David.

"Then come and have a drink. Oh yes, I can manage to get you one, although the pubs are not supposed to be open. As it happens, I am a member of the Gildershaw Club."

"No, thank you," replied David. "I don't feel like it just now."

David looked at Grimshaw keenly, and wondered why he should wish to talk with him.

"Well, if you won't you won't," went on Dick, "but personally I always get a drink when I can. You are a friend of the Trebarthas aren't you?"

"I know Nick Trebartha," he replied.

"Have you been to Wentworth by any chance?"

"No," replied David.

"Then you don't know Miss Rashleigh very well?"

David gave Grimshaw a searching glance. It was evident that he was making conversation, and that he was in a clumsy way trying to lead to a point whereby he could, more or less naturally, ask the questions he had in his mind.

The truth was, Dick Grimshaw had just come from Wentworth. He had received the letter Tamsin Rashleigh had written him immediately after David's visit there, and, being much annoyed by its contents had, on the previous afternoon gone to see Tamsin, and had demanded to know what her previous engagement was. Tamsin, angered by what she felt to be an impertinence, refused to tell him, whereupon Dick had determined to pay another visit to Wentworth in order to find out whether her so-called previous engagement were not a mere subterfuge. On arriving there, however, the servant had told him that Miss Rashleigh was not at home and that he had no information as to her whereabouts.

"Do you know," asked Grimshaw a little nervously, "whether Tammy is at Mythamroyd to-day?"

He could not have told why, but David felt annoyed at Grimshaw's free use of Miss Rashleigh's name. He was a bounder, and although David had no interest in the lady in question beyond the fact that she was the patroness of the living he was so deeply interested in, he resented this freedom.

"Tammy," he repeated. "I know of no one of that name."

Dick Grimshaw was not a fool, and he saw the meaning in David's words.

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"Yes, you do," he replied. "You heard me call her Tammy up at the house the other day. The fact is, she and I are very good pals; in fact, I expect we shall make a match of it."

Again David looked at the other keenly. Bolder as the fellow was, he would not give such a confidence to a passing stranger without a purpose.

"I know nothing of Miss Rashleigh's movements," was his guarded reply. "Certainly I have not seen her to-day."

"But you are staying with the Trebarthas, aren't you?"

"More or less," he said noncommittingly.

"You are sure you won't come with me for a drink?" Dick again invited after an awkward silence. "Then I think I will go in and have one by myself," whereupon he got out of the car, and made his way towards a building in the near distance.

"I wonder who he is, and what he is doing here?" he reflected as he made his way to the Club. "I don't like him. He has too much side for me—Godolphin—Godolphin! If I remember right the Godolphins used to be great swells. I wonder if, in spite of his refusal to tell me anything, he is not interested in Tammy? Anyhow, I have spiked his guns; he can't very well think anything about her after what I told him."

Meanwhile, David continued his tour of investigation, and studied the life of Gildershaw from the churchman's standpoint during the remainder of the day. He discovered that the attendance at the Nonconformist Churches was somewhat larger in the evening than in the morning, but that that of the Parish Church was about the same. As far as he could judge, the Churches had little or no influence on the life of the town. He saw crowds of youths and girls thronging the streets, while as the evening advanced, a great deal of horse-play was the order of the day. The public-houses did a roaring trade, and while

there was but little drunkenness, crowds of foul-mouthed fellows made the darkness hideous.

"Yes," he reflected, as late that night he got into his car and made his way towards Ben's Cross, "Gildershaw is, to all intents and purposes, a pagan town. From what I can gather, only a small fraction are in any way associated with any of the Churches. Religion is nearly a dead letter, and is becoming more and more so. If things go on as they are going on now, organized Christianity will have died out entirely in two or three generations, and then——"

Almost mechanically he drew the car up to the side of the road, and stopped the engine. He had, by this time, reached a vast stretch of open moor where a wide view of the country could be obtained. The sky had now cleared, and the pale crescent of a five-day old moon lit up the whole countryside. So bright was the sky that scarcely a star was visible. Now and then, a light breeze swept across the moors making a wailing noise, but beyond this no sound was to be heard.

"What shall I do?" he asked himself. "Shall I take on this job or shan't I?"

Not a soul was in sight. The road which stretched across the rocky moorland was empty. Not a house was visible.

Seating himself on a rough boulder, he gave himself over to thought, and presently the mystery as well as the grandeur of the silence possessed him. He had not been able to think collectedly and clearly during his stay in the town, but now, far away from the haunts of men, and the clash of the busy world, thoughts came surging into his mind which had hitherto been unknown to him.

The night began to speak. He was grappling with a tremendous question; should he or should he not come to Gildershaw and give himself to the work to which he had been invited? He realized as never before the meaning of the words Nick Trebartha had spoken to him on the night of his coming to Ben's Cross. Either Christianity was everything or it was

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nothing. Either he, as a clergyman, was seeking to perpetuate a message which came from God, or he was a parrot repeating without meaning an empty cry.

David Godolphin was a passably honest man. He was more than that. At heart he was a hater of shams and a lover of truth. He was not one, if he knew it, to bolster up a myth. Truth before all things was his motto, although he did not know it. But he seemed to be sure of nothing. The means by which he had been offered the Gildershaw living mattered less and less ; in one sense it mattered nothing to him. He had been invited there at the caprice of a half-pagan girl, but he did want to be sure that he ought to accept.

Something, he knew not what, made him solemn, as never before. It might be his experiences through the day, it might be the silence of the night, its wonder, its mystery ; but something seemed to be listening to him. "Great God," he exclaimed aloud, "tell me what to do !"

But no answer came to his prayer. The night seemed to mock him, no sign came to make his way plain.

"Is there a God at all ?" he asked.

Without knowing why, he sprang from the rough rock on which he had been sitting, got into his car and drove rapidly back to Mythamroyd. A bright light from the old library window welcomed him as he drew near the house. A few seconds later Naomi greeted him.

"The prodigal has returned," she said. "Come inside, David. Have you had any supper ?"

"I had forgotten supper," he replied. "Yes, I think I am hungry."

Naomi caught his arm and led him into the old, book-lined room and there he saw Tamsin Rashleigh.

"You have spent the day at Gildershaw ?" she asked. "You have been trying to make up your mind ?"

He nodded.

"Well, are you coming ?"

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"Yes," he replied, but he scarcely knew that the word had left his lips, certainly not what had caused him to utter it.

"That's splendid," replied the girl.
David did not speak.

CHAPTER VIII

THE NEW RECTOR

“**I** HAVE persuaded Tammy to stay the night,” Naomi Trebartha informed David, when, after he had eaten his supper, he rejoined the family in the old library. “I hadn’t much difficulty in doing it, either.”

“No,” replied Tamsin Rashleigh, “I wanted to stay. Naomi informed me that you were going to pay a second visit to Gildershaw, and make another tour of investigation. I was anxious to know how the place struck you on your second visit. Of course, too, I wanted to know what decision you had come to. I am glad you are coming, Mr. Godolphin. What caused you to decide?”

“I don’t know,” replied David; “even now I am not sure whether I ought to come.”

“Not sure! why you told me a few minutes ago that——”

“Yes, I know,” interrupted the young man. “The word escaped me almost before I knew I had spoken it. All the same, I am not sure whether I ought to come. It was this way: I was not able to think clearly through the day. I tramped around the town, as our Cornish folks would put it, and tried to see everything. I went to the parish church twice, visited several of the chapels, watched the life of the town, and, as far as I could, took note of everything. But nothing came to me clearly. Then, on my way back here, I stopped the car near that high peak, which I think you call Hawkspur Point. There I sat down and tried to think. My mind was clearer by this time; perhaps it was because the clouds had all rolled

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away from the sky, and because of the silence up there. Anyhow, I tried hard to see what I ought to do. I doubt if I can make you realize what a tremendous and solemn feeling came over me. There, on those rocky moors and amidst the silence of the night, I thought I felt God near."

He looked around him as he spoke, and saw that both Nick and Naomi were listening intently, but that Tamsin Rashleigh's mind seemed far away. There was almost a vacant look in her eyes.

"I think I tried to pray," he went on, "and you see——"

He stopped again. He might have been trying to recall his feelings as he sat alone there on the wind-swept moors.

Again he looked around and saw that Nick and Naomi had both fixed their eyes upon him as though eager to know what he would say next. On Tamsin's lips, however, a mocking smile played. The sight of this caused a revulsion of feeling in David's heart. Hitherto he had been like a man thinking aloud, and telling what had taken place, not as one relating an experience, but rather as one unconsciously describing something that had taken place in the inner chambers of his being. That smile of Tamsin's seemed to change his mentality, and he lapsed into silence.

"And did God answer your prayer, Mr. Godolphin?" she asked presently. "Did you hear Him speak to you?"

There was such a tone of compulsion in her voice that he answered in spite of himself.

"No," he replied. "Everything became hard and forbidding, the heavens above looked like steel; and I even doubted if there were a God at all."

"And after that?" asked the girl.

"I came on here," he replied.

"And then?" asked Nick.

"Then I saw Miss Rashleigh, and she asked me if I had made up my mind to come. I said 'yes,' but I didn't know what I meant."

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Evidently David spoke under the stress of a strong emotion. There was a steely glitter in his eyes, and his voice was hoarse.

"But surely you are not going to back out now?" asked Tamsin.

"Oh no; in a way I can't understand, I feel I have pledged myself, and I never go back from my word."

Another silence followed, a silence which was almost painful.

"Tell us your experiences, David," demanded Nick. "Describe to us what you have seen and heard at Gildershaw."

"There seems nothing to tell," replied the young man, "and yet I feel it has been a day of destiny."

He thereupon went on to tell what he had seen and heard. He spoke freely and easily now, and evidently found no difficulty whatever in giving his impressions. Indeed, his descriptions of the services at the parish church were almost graphic. When he came to tell of his meeting with Dick Grimshaw he hesitated again.

"What! did you see Dick Grimshaw?" Tamsin asked almost eagerly.

"Yes, he stopped his car in the street and spoke to me."

"What did he say?" and there was eagerness in her voice.

"I think I would rather not tell you," he replied.

"But you must. Did he ask anything about me?"

"He asked about you, certainly. He wanted to know if you were here or not."

"But that wasn't all. Tell me what he said besides."

"He said you and he were great pals," David blurted out, "and he told me that you and he were going to make a match of it."

"And what did you say in reply?" The girl seemed to have forgotten that they were almost strangers.

"I said nothing," replied David. "What was there to say?"

The four remained in the old library nearly an hour after this,

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while David described his impressions of Gildershaw, but Tamsin Rashleigh never spoke a word. After his reference to his meeting with Dick Grimshaw she seemed to have lost interest in his visit, and when after midnight they repaired to their rooms, she was still silent and distraught.

"Miss Rashleigh," said David, when they met on the following morning, "you have not changed your mind, have you?"

"Changed my mind! What about?"

"About the offer of the living."

"Certainly not; why?"

"There may be difficulties," replied David. "I am not in favour with my bishop, and it is possible he will try to persuade your bishop not to consent to my appointment."

This evidently angered the girl. Her eyes flashed, and her features had become set.

"No bishop in the world shall dictate to me," she declared. "I am acting within my rights, and I shall enforce them. If he raises any objections I will fight him."

"Then the matter is settled," replied David. "I will call on your solicitor in Ben's Cross this morning."

"Do you think you will have trouble with your bishop?" asked the girl.

"I may," he replied. "A good many difficulties may be raised, and in all probability it will be urged that I am an unsuitable man for the post."

"But surely you will not kow-tow to the authorities?"

"I will kow-tow to no man," replied David.

I do not pretend to know the details of what took place afterwards. From what I have been informed however, David was right in his surmises. All sorts of statements were made as to the inadvisability of appointing a man so young as he to such an important living as Gildershaw. Nevertheless, as nothing definite could be brought against him, and as, although he had no sympathy with the bishop's predilections, his work and his character would bear the strictest investigation, the

bishop of the diocese in which Gildershaw was situated could find no sufficient reason for objecting to his induction.

It came to pass therefore, that towards the end of November David had not only taken up his residence at the Gildershaw rectory, but was also inducted as rector of the parish.

As may be imagined, Mrs. Godolphin was in a high state of excitement when he returned from Yorkshire. She asked him innumerable questions concerning his visit ; seemed exceedingly anxious to know every particular about the social amenities of the parish, and was delighted at his descriptions.

“ Yes, David,” she informed him, “ I think you have done very well. I have made all sorts of inquiries while you have been away, and have learnt nothing but good of the place. As you may remember, Mr. Page, the rector of St. Minver, came from Yorkshire only two years ago, and he was able to tell me a great deal about Gildershaw. It is quite an important parish, and may prove a natural stepping stone to higher things.”

David did not reply to this. He knew that his mother thought little about, and understood less the doubts which had come to his mind. Neither was she in the least troubled about the new thoughts and beliefs of the present generation. She was simply an old-fashioned lady who looked upon a church as a necessary institution in every parish, while it was the rector's duty to conduct the services in a decorous and seemly manner. It was also his duty to render aid to his parishioners when they were in trouble. Naturally, too, he would celebrate marriages, conduct funeral services, and attend the other functions which his position involved. As rector also he would, next to the squire, occupy a pre-eminent position, but as for anything else, it was outside the ambit of her consideration.

“ Mind, David,” she went on, “ in spite of all you have told me, I don't think that Miss Rashleigh has treated you with due respect.”

“ Why, mother ? ”

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"I still maintain," she insisted, "that she should have invited you to Wentworth to stay while you were making inquiries, and I think the least she could have done would have been to ask me, your mother, especially as you are a bachelor, to stay at Wentworth while the rectory is being made ready for us."

In spite of this however, she was much excited at the thought of going to Yorkshire with her son, and although no word came to her from Tamsin, she looked forward with great anticipation to being mistress of Gildershaw rectory.

If the truth must be told, David had himself been disappointed at not hearing anything further from Tamsin. He had thought from her eagerness that he should accept the living, she would have taken an active interest in his coming, but not a word came to him. Indeed, when he was informed that almost immediately after he had parted from her at Mythamroyd she had left Yorkshire for the Continent, he was not only chagrined, but a little angry.

On his return to Yorkshire a little later however, he underwent a revulsion of feeling. He found that the rectory had been thoroughly cleaned and renovated, and that to all intents and purposes it had been made ready for habitation.

"What does this mean?" he asked himself, as he wandered around the old house. "I might have been a Methodist minister. A house is not only supplied for me, but furnished. From what I can gather too, everything old Whitecross had that was worth keeping has been allowed to remain. Even his books are here. I had been wondering how I should be able to scrape up enough money even to furnish the house partly, and now I find that everything is done for me."

Not that he was altogether pleased with this. His pride rebelled a little against the patroness doing so much for him; nevertheless, he could not help feeling grateful to her. As far as he could gather, however, she herself had not been near the rectory, but had given instructions to her steward

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and his wife, who was reported to be a "managing woman," to have everything in readiness for his coming.

He said nothing to his mother about this, and when, at the beginning of November, he brought her to Yorkshire, the old lady, who had been sorely troubled as to how she could furnish the rectory, found it made ready for habitation, and was more than a little delighted.

"This is splendid, David my boy," she ejaculated. "How in the world did you manage it?"

David, who had no wish for his mother to know the truth, evasively informed her that many of his predecessor's belongings had been secured, and thus much trouble had been avoided.

"Have you heard anything from Miss Rashleigh yet?" his mother asked, when two days after her advent in Yorkshire she sat down to breakfast with her son.

"Not a word," replied David.

"I shall give that young woman a piece of my mind when I see her," she announced.

"I think you will have to wait a good time for the opportunity," David laughed.

"Why?"

"I called at Wentworth yesterday," he replied, "and was informed that she was still away from home. More than that, no one knew when she was coming back to Yorkshire again."

"But she *oughtn't* to be away from home!" exclaimed Mrs. Godolphin indignantly. "She has no business to be. Fancy a new rector coming into the parish and the patroness not being there to receive him. It's monstrous! It isn't as though you were a nobody. The Godolphins are as good as any Rashleigh that ever lived. I have never seen such behaviour."

"I fancy you will have to accustom yourself to such things, mother. Old-fashioned ideas are dying out."

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"Then it's time they were brought to life again," asserted Mrs. Godolphin indignantly. "I have made inquiries while I have been here, and from what I can learn, she is the only one beside ourselves who can claim to belong to a county family. There are a good many respectable people in the town, of course, but as I have said repeatedly, the best of these manufacturers are only tradespeople ; thus it is our duty to stand by our class."

"Don't be silly mother ; that sort of thing doesn't go down these days. The manufacturers as you call them, hold their heads quite as high as Miss Rashleigh, and are quite as much thought of."

"I don't believe it," snapped the old lady. "Anyhow, I shall give that young woman a piece of my mind when I see her."

A few minutes later, however, such thoughts were driven from her mind. The postman arrived bringing a letter from the bishop of the diocese, which informed David that he had appointed a date when he would come to Gildershaw for his induction, and asked him to make arrangements accordingly.

* * * *

"Well, Godolphin," said the bishop to David, on the night after he had preached the induction sermon, "I think the services have gone off well."

"You preached a splendid sermon, Bishop, and I am no end obliged to you for the kind things you said about me ; as for the men from the neighbouring parishes, they gave me a royal welcome."

The two were seated in the study of the old rectory, and as the bishop had arranged to stay the night, each sat at ease before a glowing fire, and puffed his cigar contentedly.

"You have a most responsible position here," went on the bishop presently. "It offers great possibilities, too."

"Yes ?" queried David.

"Yes. You see, Whitecross let down the parish rather

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badly. He was a bookworm and very little else. Although he was well off, and the income was fairly large, he refused to keep a curate, when, in reality he ought to have had two. As a consequence, the church went down. I wrote to him repeatedly about it, but I might as well have written to Hawkspur Point. I couldn't very well take action in the matter, first of all because he was an old man and couldn't in the course of nature last long, and second, because as the gift of the living was in the hands of the Rashleighs, it would seem like undue interference. Still, I expect great things from you."

"In what way?" asked David.

"Well, I expect you to restore the church to its primitive glory. At present it doesn't occupy the position it ought to occupy. It hasn't the influence it ought to have. Why, a church such as this ought to be the centre of life for the whole town, and crowded every Sunday. You feel that, don't you?"

"Yes," replied David, "but how is the change you speak of to be brought about? From what I can gather, it is quite twenty years since there was anything like a congregation, and during the last five, only a mere handful have attended. Besides that, since the beginning of the century there has been an utter change in the life of the town, and church-going is no longer the fashion."

"Yes, I realize that," replied the bishop sadly; "and it is true all over the diocese. Still, you are a young man, and should stir things up."

"But how?" persisted David.

"By becoming a real father to the people."

"Yes, but again, how? You know the Yorkshire people, know that they refuse to be patronized; that they refuse to be interfered with."

The bishop stirred a little uneasily in his chair.

"Godolphin," he said, "you don't mind my speaking to you plainly, do you?"

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"Not a bit ; I hope you will."

"Well, then, I had grave doubts about the wisdom of your appointment. You didn't get on very well in the West of England, and your late bishop wrote very plainly about you."

"I gathered that," replied David drily.

"Yes, you see, he is a sound churchman, while you seem to care very little about the church."

"I say, Bishop !" exclaimed David.

"I must speak plainly," went on the older man. "It is true he could say nothing definite against your work or your character, but you were nevertheless a thorn in his side. You seemed to regard your position lightly, and did not attach sufficient importance to the mysteries of our Faith. As for the Sacraments——"

"Yes," queried David, "please don't hesitate."

"I want to be absolutely frank. You belong, if I am informed aright, to the Modernist school of thought. You regard the Orders of the Nonconformist preachers as equal to your own, while you look upon the Blessed Sacrament, not as the very centre and life of Christianity, but as something almost subsidiary."

David was silent for a few seconds, then he sighed.

"But what would you *do* ?" he persisted again.

"You are the rector of this parish," replied the bishop, "and you are the spiritual head of the church here. You must remember that. Thus it is your duty to insist that the church shall have the first place. Remember, the church is God's visible body on earth, and you must make the people feel it. One of the curses of the so-called Reformation was that it lowered the ideal of the church ; and from the time of Elizabeth to 1832, the glory of the church ideal departed. In fact, Christianity in the true sense of the word was dead. You must restore the primitive glory of the Catholic Church, Godolphin ; that must be first and foremost. That is the only way to revive faith. It is only by restoring the authority of

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the church ; it is only by a revival of the beliefs in the sacraments that we shall save this age from a blank materialism."

David was silent. As we have said, he had been troubled greatly by the utter indifference of the people about religious matters, and he had longed for this opportunity of speaking with the head of the diocese. Surely, he had thought, the bishop, as a man of God, will be able to help me, and to guide me in the right path. Up to now however, the old man had, to him, only been touching the mere outworks, the mere details, and had never attacked the heart of the citadel at all.

"That is my first advice, Godolphin," he went on. "Restore the old Catholic usages and destroy these modern innovations. Mind you, I don't say the Reformation was not necessary; in some ways it was ; but remember, the English Church is a part of the great Catholic Church, and as such it must be regarded. I don't say we are Roman ; we are not, but we are Catholic."

"But look here, Bishop," urged David. "As you say, I have accepted the position of rector in this parish. Religion is seemingly dead, and there is practically no interest in it. Now then, supposing you were appointed rector here, what would you do? Suppose you came into this parish as rector to find what I find, how would you set to work? The church is ordinarily practically empty, while the life of the town is drifting towards paganism. What steps would you take?"

The bishop hesitated a few seconds before replying. He had by this time begun to see the kind of man David was, and felt that he must walk warily.

"As I said," he replied, "I would begin by restoring faith in the church ; its authority, and its catholicity. I should insist that the people must regard the church as the centre of everything."

"Yes, but what would you *do*?" asked David. "How would you make the people listen to you, believe you, and *realize* that what you said was *true*?"

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"Well, I think I should begin by having more attractive services," replied the bishop. "Then I should have fasting Communion every morning. I should have sung Eucharist every Sunday morning in place of Matins, and I should pay a good deal of attention to my choir. I should have the best singing in the neighbourhood. These Yorkshire people are fond of music, and I should see to it that they had the very best. Then I should start Confirmation classes right away, and I should see to it that every boy and girl in the town was invited to them. Above all, I should make the Blessed Sacrament the centre of everything."

"Has this been done in other parishes?" asked David.

"I am glad to say it has," replied the prelate, "and with very marked success. Churches which used to have very uninteresting, dreary services have been made attractive. In many cases, scores of young people have been prepared for Confirmation, while the church and its Sacraments have been restored to their former dignity."

"Excuse me, Bishop," cried David starting to his feet, "but have you gone deep enough?"

"Deep enough, how?"

"I mean this. Have the churches laid hold of the people generally? Is there a higher standard of morality? Has the drift towards paganism been checked? Is there a general movement towards Faith? What effect have the churches upon the life of the people? For to me, the church is only the means to an end. Is there a higher standard of life? Is there a greater realization of God?"

"I don't quite understand your questions," asserted the bishop. "What are you driving at?"

"I am driving at this," replied David. "As far as I can see, except in the case of a certain number of women and a very few men, the church might not exist at all. The people, that is the great mass of them, either laugh at us parsons or else they shrug their shoulders and regard us as useless."

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Organized Christianity seems to have no influence on the life of the nation. You said it was necessary that there should be a revival of Catholicism. What has this revival of so-called Catholicism meant? Only a small fraction of the population darkens the doors of any of our churches. What do the working-class people care for them? In what way do the churches influence the industrial life of our nation? That is what I am wanting to get at. How can I really make people believe in Jesus Christ? That is my difficulty. As far as I can see, the so-called revival of faith in sacramentalism which you speak of, hasn't affected the real life of the people one jot or tittle."

What the bishop would have replied to this I don't know. Certainly he looked at the young man with angry astonishment; but at that moment there was the sound of eager voices outside the door, and a few seconds later Mrs. Godolphin came in, accompanied by Tamsin Rashleigh.

CHAPTER IX

TAMSIN AND DAVID

“**I** OUGHT to be ashamed of myself, Mr. Godolphin!” cried the girl, as she rushed towards David with outstretched hand. “I meant to have got back days ago, but something has always happened. I know I ought to have been here to welcome you, instead of which, I have been gadding around Europe. Your mother has given me quite a lecture which I thoroughly deserve. However, I am here now. You will forgive me, won’t you?”

The entrance of the girl had changed the atmosphere of the room as if by magic, and for the moment it seemed even to the bishop as though the matters they had been discussing were of secondary importance.

“I only came home this afternoon,” she went on gaily, “and I found thousands of things to do; but when I heard that the bishop was coming to induct you, I determined to come to see you before I went to bed. Do say that you forgive me!”

David answered her in the same spirit of raillery as that in which she had spoken, then turning towards the bishop he said:

“You haven’t noticed that his Lordship is here, have you, Miss Rashleigh?”

“Oh I beg pardon!” cried the girl, “I had quite forgotten! I had been told that he was staying at the rectory to-night. How are you, Bishop? I know I ought to have invited you to stay at Wentworth, but there, you are far more at

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home here, aren't you ? ” She held out her hand to the prelate as she spoke, and then added, “ And haven't I selected a splendid man as rector ? ”

Even the bishop, somewhat angered as he was by the free and easy way in which the girl addressed him, could not help smiling as he looked at her face. She was the embodiment of youth and winsomeness. She seemed to exhale sunshine, while morbidity and sadness vanished as she spoke.

“ Yes, I know you are angry with me,” she went on with a laugh ; “ and in your heart of hearts you are calling me all sorts of names. I know I ought to have been at the church to-night and to have taken a great interest in your sermon ; but then I hate sermons, bishop, simply hate them. Frankly, I am hopeless ! I believe far more in the sayings of the old Greeks than I do in that man Paul, who went to Athens and told them what a terrible lot of people they were. You see, I have not changed a bit.”

“ No, you haven't,” replied the bishop. “ I remember telling your father when I came to Wentworth not long before he died, that you were indescribable.”

“ Yes I know you did, but you had to admit to my father that I played a better hand of bridge than any girl you had ever met. Now don't deny it ! ” and the girl shook her head saucily. “ You love a game of bridge yourself ; you admitted it to my father, and although Lady Wentworth who was staying with us didn't want to play, you would not rest until she promised to make up the fourth. Confess the truth now.”

“ I admit I am fond of a hand of bridge,” admitted the bishop a little uncomfortably, “ and that I see no harm in it, if the stakes are small. But come now ; ought you not to have been at the services to-night, and couldn't you have managed it if you had tried ? ”

“ Of course I could,” said the girl, “ but as I told you, I hate sermons, and I haven't a bit of interest in the church.”

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"I wonder at that," he retorted, "when you were so persistent in exercising your rights to appoint a new rector to the parish."

"Yes, but haven't I appointed the right one?" she laughed. "Do you know, Bishop, I shocked Mr. Blackburn terribly; he is a good, old-fashioned, Nonconformist lawyer, and he was simply outraged when I told him what I regarded as the qualifications of a good rector."

"And what were those qualifications?"

"Let me see," said the girl, as if reflecting. "Oh, I remember! I told him I wanted a man who could play a sound game of bridge; who was a good dancer; who was fond of hunting, and who believed in the people enjoying themselves. Yes, I believe those were the chief ones."

"But surely those were not all?"

"No," and the girl appeared to be trying to remember. "Oh yes, I have got it now. I said that he must be a *gentleman*; that I would not have one of those clodhoppers as rector of the parish. I am sure I was right too. Don't you think so? I was staying with some friends in Lancashire a little while ago, and they had as their vicar a man who did not know the a.b.c. of decent behaviour. He had been a farm labourer or a collier or something of that sort, and was utterly out of place as vicar. As a consequence, my friends could not make a friend of him; so, when dear old Mr. Whitecross died I determined that whatever else we had, we would have a gentleman at the rectory."

"But surely, Miss Rashleigh," interposed the bishop, "being a gentleman is not the chief qualification for such an office. Why, even many of the Popes have come from the common people. Then think of the Apostles; they——"

"Oh stop! stop!" cried Tamsin. "I don't know anything about the early days of the church, I only know about what I want now."

"Come, now," said the bishop, "let's be serious for a minute."

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“Just before you came, Godolphin and I were discussing what a rector ought to do in a parish like this. What are your ideas ? ”

“My ideas ! ” laughed the girl. “Well, to begin with, I hope Mr. Godolphin will have a really good time. I hope he will be friendly with everyone, and make everyone happy. Do you know, there are lots of nice people in the town, and I hope he will be friendly with everyone. I am looking forward to a lot of social functions, too. Mr. Godolphin admits that he is a good dancer, and that he is very fond of it ; so I hope we shall have some really jolly times.”

“But the work of the church, my dear young lady ! What of that ? ”

“Yes, what of it ? During all the years that dear old Mr. Whitecross was here, he bothered no one. Of course he conducted the services, and attended to the business of the parish ; indeed, he was an ideal clergyman, and I loved him dearly. I don’t say that he could preach,” she added, “indeed, I have heard it often remarked he ‘couldn’t preach for nuts ;’ but he did the work of the parish, and when he died everyone was sorry.”

It was impossible to be serious while Tamsin was in the room. Evidently she had made up her mind not to discuss anything in the spirit which both David and the bishop had at heart ; indeed, she revealed a new side to her character. Hitherto, while a sceptic, she had shown a deep interest in serious things. David could not help remembering the look of dismay on her face as she described the case of Emily Dixon, and tried to think of means whereby the girl could be saved from making a tragedy of her life. She had also seemed to sympathize with him in the doubts which had filled his own mind ; but now she was as irresponsible as a kitten ; nothing seemed to matter to her but pleasure and enjoyment.

He thought he partly understood this, and he believed she took a delight in shocking the bishop. She knew the kind of

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man he was, knew how punctilious about all matters ecclesiastical.

"What time is it?" she asked presently.

"It is nearly a quarter to eleven," replied the bishop, looking at his watch.

"Then I must be getting back home," she remarked. "Mr. Godolphin, you will walk back to Wentworth with me, won't you? I came here in a car," she added, "but I sent the chauffeur home, as I didn't like the idea of his hanging around here; and for another thing, I wanted a chat with Mr. Godolphin. You don't mind do you?"

"I shall be delighted," responded David.

"I know it is a shame to drag you away from this good fire, but I want a walk badly, and—and—How do you like the rectory, Mrs. Godolphin? I do hope you will be comfortable here."

A few minutes later David was walking by her side towards the great house, while the bishop was being shown to his room. I am inclined to think that Tamsin had shocked that gentleman more by her cool request to David to see her home, than by her remarks about the necessary qualities of a rector. His Lordship had bidden her good night in a very stately manner, but naturally he said nothing.

"You are not annoyed with me, Mr. Godolphin?" she exclaimed, as they drew near the park gates.

"Annoyed!" cried David. "I am simply delighted."

"Of course you would say that," retorted the girl; "but I asked you partly for your own sake. Although I had a serious purpose in wanting to speak to you, I was sure you would be bored to death by that old man, and would be glad to get away. I don't know much about bishops, but I know he would regard it as his duty to talk to you about your duties in the parish, and as you live in different worlds——"

"Different worlds?—what do you mean?"

"Well, he is a thorough-going ecclesiastic; while you,

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although you are a clergyman, are also a man. Do you think I shocked him ? ”

“ I am sure you did.”

“ After all, why not ? ” she said, like one talking to herself, after a few seconds silence. “ Of course, he is a bishop, but what is a bishop ? A few years ago he was a fledgling curate, and I expect had heaps of love affairs with the girls in his parishes, as well as difficulties with his rectors. By good luck on his part he has been made bishop, while men of far greater attainments have remained obscure. Besides, he is as prosy as a charlady, and I am sure you were glad to get away from him. That is one reason why I asked you to walk up with me to the Hall ; but that wasn’t the chief reason.”

“ What was it then ? ” asked David.

“ I want your advice. It is no use having a clergyman without going to him for advice, is it ? ”

There was a bantering tone in her voice, as she said this, although David thought he detected something serious in it as well.

“ What about ? ” he asked, little thinking of what her answer would be.

“ Dick Grimshaw has proposed to me,” she said quietly ; “ indeed, he has proposed to me more than once.”

David was silent, perhaps his astonishment that she should have made the announcement in such matter-of-fact way kept him from speaking.

“ I went to Paris directly after you saw me at Mythamroyd,” she continued, “ and he followed me there.—Oh, it was all perfectly correct ; I went there to visit some friends, and took my maid with me. Anyhow, he followed me, and as I said, proposed to me.”

“ And you ? ” queried the young man.

“ I refused him,” she replied quietly. “ I told him I did not want to become engaged, and had no desire to get married.”

Why it was David could not tell, but he felt his heart beating

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rapidly ; and found himself realizing that his antagonism to Dick Grimshaw was becoming stronger each minute.

" You said he had proposed to you more than once," he asserted. " Was that the second time ? "

" Oh no, up to then he had seemed to regard the matter as settled, although he had never spoken to me so directly. Anyhow, as I told you, he followed me to Paris."

" And since ? " queried David.

" He seemed to take my refusal rather badly," the girl informed him. " I fancy he could not understand that anyone could resist him. Anyhow, he stayed in Paris for some days, evidently with the expectation that I should alter my mind ; but when I decided to go on to Italy he came back here. I gave him no opportunity of speaking to me alone again," she added.

" When was his last proposal, then ? "

" This afternoon. By some means or other he discovered that I was coming home to-day, and about an hour after my arrival he appeared. He said he would not take ' no ' for an answer, even although I persisted in saying it a million times."

" Then how does the matter stand now ? "

" Stand now ? " repeated Tamsin. " When he came to me this afternoon he told me he could not believe I was serious in Paris. Of course I told him I was, whereupon he made another announcement of his undying affection for me, and tried to persuade me to marry him."

" And you ? "

" I persisted in saying no."

" Then what followed ? "

" He told me that although I might persist in refusing him he meant to have me. You know how grim and determined he is, and how he boasts that the Grimshaws have, in the long run, always got what they wanted. I feel a little afraid," she added.

" Why should you ? " asked David.

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“Because I am not quite sure of myself.”

“Not sure of yourself? Do you mean that you like him?”

“Like him! of course I like him. I know he has a great many faults, and is a good deal of a bounder; but he has his good points as well, and is a general favourite. It isn’t that.”

“What is it then?”

The girl was silent.

“You will forgive me if I seem a little rude,” went on David, “but I presume you are serious in asking my advice?”

“I am. Very serious. Why do you ask?”

“I am a little old-fashioned,” replied David, “and I don’t believe in the happy-go-lucky attitude which modern girls adopt in regard to marriage. It is a very serious matter, and can easily spell tragedy.”

“Let that be taken for granted. What advice do you give me?”

“Do you love him?” asked David bluntly.

“No,” replied the girl, “not as you are thinking of it. For that matter, I don’t believe I am capable of what you would call love. I am not a bit sentimental; I don’t care a fig about flirting as some girls do, and have no sympathy whatever with the belief that what is called love is necessary to a happy marriage. All the same——”

“All the same what?” urged the new rector, as the girl hesitated.

“I don’t know,” she replied slowly, “but let me try to explain, Mr. Godolphin. You will perhaps have heard that my father died about a year ago. We were good friends, although we were not what you might call pals. He seldom took me into his confidence, and I never took him into mine. All the same, when he died I felt very much alone. I found myself with heaps of money, and the possessor of a great house in which I was supposed to live; I was also a large employer of labour. Two of the biggest woollen mills in Gildershaw belong to me, as well as the Gildershaw colliery. As a con-

sequence, all the responsibility seems to rest on me. You can understand that, can't you ? ”

“ I think so,” replied David.

“ Of course,” went on the girl, “ I have hosts of friends, or what you may call friends ; but I have no one to confide in, no one to tell my thoughts to, or with whom I can share my burdens. I feel awfully young, but although I am fickle-pated I have many serious hours. Am I making myself plain ? ”

“ I am trying to understand you,” replied David.

“ Well, then, it comes to this. Here am I, Tamsin Wentworth Rashleigh, aged twenty-three, the owner of a lot of things, and with possibly fifty or sixty years of life before me. What shall I do with myself ? In spite of the fact that I surround myself with lots of people, that I am fond of travelling, and visit a number of houses, I often feel alone in the world and I am afraid of life. You see I have no one to advise me.”

“ Surely——” protested David.

“ Put it another way then. I have no one in whom I can confide, no one to whom I can tell my thoughts. As a consequence, I have to settle everything myself. I have to be the arbiter of my own destiny. Having neither father nor mother to advise me I have to decide everything for myself.—I don't object to that ; in fact I rather like it, and in all probability, although I am asking your advice now, I shall not take it. All the same, although you are a clergyman, I look upon you as a sensible, level-headed man. Besides that, I like you. I like the way in which you accepted the offer of the living here, and when Mr. Trebartha brought you over here, and I saw what sort of a man you were, I felt awfully anxious to see you at the rectory. Consequently, after Dick Grimshaw said what he did say this afternoon, I decided to ask your advice.”

“ But you said you were afraid,” asserted David. “ What did you mean by that ? ”

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“It’s this way,” replied the girl, “although I am told I am wilful and stubborn, I sometimes feel I want someone on whom I can lean, someone stronger and wiser than myself. Yes, I mean it. Indeed, at times I want someone to decide things for me. Well, here is Dick Grimshaw ; I know he is not a pattern young man, but then I hate pattern young men. He says he loves me, loves me to distraction. I believe he is honest, too, and would do his best to make me happy. He isn’t a Sir Galahad, but he is strong, determined, and in a way masterful. I don’t love him in the way the old-fashioned novelists say that a girl should love a man, but I admire his strength and his tenacity of purpose, and yet——”

“And yet what ? ” asked David, as the girl paused.

“He has, in his own way, been paying me court for years, even before my father died. I could see what was in his mind, although I never regarded him seriously. In fact, I detested the idea of marriage, and in a way do still. Well, as I told you, he followed me to Paris and proposed to me. I refused him ; upon which he grew angry, and was wellnigh insulting in his remarks. I don’t know that I resented that ; I think I like persistent men who will never admit being beaten. I left Paris however, and went on to Italy, not returning home till this afternoon. I hadn’t been home more than an hour before he came and proposed to me again. I repeated my refusal, but he took no notice of it. He said he was going to have me, whatever I said ; he said he would murder the man who tried to get me, and I really believe he would. I know I am making a long story of this, and I am boring you to tears ; but here is my difficulty. I am pigheaded, but I can’t go on being pigheaded for ever ; and I am afraid he will catch me in an hour of weakness, and then I shall do what he says.”

“And yet you say you don’t love him,” urged David.

“I shall never love any man as you are thinking of love,” replied the girl. “But the thought of growing old alone is horrible ; the thought of going through life fighting my own

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battles, bearing my own burdens without an intimate helper and adviser, makes me afraid. That is why, in a moment of weakness, I might do what he says, and damn the consequences. You see, I don't dislike him, and I do admire his persistence and masterfulness. Now, what have you to say ? ”

“ You don't mind my being brutally frank do you ? ” asked David.

“ I want you to be.”

“ And to say what I really mean ? ”

“ Of course I do, I shouldn't have asked your advice else.”

“ And you will listen to me patiently ? ”

“ I'll try.”

“ Well, I want to speak to you first of all as a clergyman. Don't you need religion ? You say you feel alone in the world, and that you have no one in whom you can trust. Isn't that wrong ? Haven't you got God ? ”

“ Please, *please* ! Mr. Godolphin,” protested Tamsin.

“ It is no use your protesting,” replied David. “ As I have told you, I am not much of a parson, but you have got to hear me. You will have to get back to the great fundamental facts of life—the fact that you are God's creature ; the fact that God cares for you and is always close to you, waiting to help you—before you feel anything like a sure footing in life. That is your first great need.”

The girl laughed almost amusedly, and there was a taunt in the words which followed.

“ Do *you* believe in God, Mr. Godolphin ? Are you *sure* of Him ? I know you have taken Orders, and have come here ostensibly as the spiritual adviser of the parish, but is what you say the great overwhelming truth of life true to you ? ”

“ I want to be absolutely honest with you Miss Rashleigh,” replied David, “ indeed I must be, else I cannot help you. Your taunt is quite justified—in a way. Although I have come here as rector of this parish, I don't know whether I am sure of anything. And yet I am. I cannot explain why, but I

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believe there is a God at the back of things ; and that until we find Him life is a chaotic, unmeaning puzzle, but when we do find Him things will be made plain."

"And have you found Him ?" the girl asked eagerly.

"I am groping, groping in the dark," replied the man, "and yet I sometimes see the light. I am finding slowly, but I am finding with *confidence* ! I believe that what I seek can be found. That is why I tell you that this is your first great need. No, I am not going to talk more about that now, but I had to say what I have said, else I shouldn't have the right to talk further."

"Go on," said Tamsin.

"You never had temptations to commit suicide I suppose ?" and David spoke slowly and distinctly.

The girl gave the young man a quick astonished glance, as though she were not sure whether he was in his right mind.

"What do you mean ?" she asked.

"This," replied David. "If ever it becomes a question of your marrying that man or of committing suicide, I should advise the latter."

They were now nearing the great house. Through the tall trees which bordered the drive they could see the grey old mansion lit up by a brightly-shining moon ; and to Tamsin the sight seemed to add weight to his words.

"I mean it," went on David. "I don't know much about women. I have never had a serious love affair in my life, but I think I can read you aright. I am not going to tell you what my impressions are about you, but I think I understand your mentality. Neither do I know the man Grimshaw intimately. I have seen him twice since I came to the rectory besides the twice I met him prior to my coming here, but I have made up my mind about him."

"And what do you think of him ?" asked the girl eagerly.

"I'm not going to tell you," he replied. "You know him

and that's enough. Have you ever considered what marriage really means, Miss Rashleigh ? ”

“ I suppose I have,—in a way.”

“ It means a woman giving herself to a man,” went on David. “ It would mean in your case, that you, Tamsin Rashleigh are *giving yourself* to that man Grimshaw. It would mean your becoming his property, his chattel, his possession, to command at will. It would mean that, night and day, throughout the whole of your life, as long as he and you should live, you would belong to him to do as he wished ; that you would be tying yourself with chains which could never be broken except by death. That you would be obedient to him in the most intimate relations of life ; that you would, in all probability become the mother——”

“ Stop ! ” cried the girl. “ For God's sake stop ! It would be hell ! ”

“ Not if you love him,” he answered.

“ But I don't ! Good night, Mr. Godolphin. I won't ask you into the house. It—it is very late,” she concluded tamely.

For a few seconds he stood looking at her. They were now standing on a broad stretch of grass in front of the house, and in the light of the moon her face looked as pale as death. There was also something in her eyes which he had never seen before. Terror, sheer, blank terror shone from them, and had he stood nearer to her he would have seen that she was shivering as though she had the palsy.

“ Good night, Miss Rashleigh,” he said holding out his hand. “ Thank you for allowing me to see you home.”

“ Thank you for coming,” she replied. By this time she had mastered herself and spoke with a laugh. “ I have enjoyed the walk tremendously. Don't you think I am a good actress, Mr. Godolphin ? ”

“ No,” replied David.

“ But I am,” she retorted. “ It is the one gift I possess. Naomi Trebartha will tell you that when I was at school even

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the mistresses did not know whether I was in earnest or play-acting. Oh, it was awful fun ! Are you fond of the theatre, Mr. Godolphin ? ”

“ Yes,” replied David. “ I remember once seeing Charles Wyndham in ‘ David Garrick,’ and the drunken scene haunted me for days. It was supposed to be laughable, but I think I nearly cried. Good night, Miss Rashleigh,” he repeated.

“ Au revoir,” she said. “ I expect we shall meet often, and I do hope that you and your mother will be happy at the rectory.”

“ Was she play-acting or was she serious, I wonder ? ” David asked himself as he made his way back to his new home.

CHAPTER X

DAVID AT WORK

A MUCH larger congregation than was usual met David in the church on the first Sunday after his induction at Gildershaw. Unknown to himself, he had aroused curiosity, and as a consequence, interest. For one thing it was reported—this largely through the instrumentality of his mother—that he came of a great Cornish family which had held high positions in the State at critical periods of our nation's history. (Mrs. Godolphin, however, had not made it known that the family had nearly died out ; that she herself had lived in a comparatively small cottage in a country village ; and that it was with great difficulty she had been able to educate her son.) As a consequence, all sorts of rumours were afloat concerning him. Some had it that he was heir to a peerage, and that at the death of a very old man, he would become an earl. This, of course, caused the gossips of the town to work overtime, and made David the centre of more than ordinary interest. Then several who had seen him during his second visit to the town recognized him, and reported the conversation they had had with him. The superintendent of the Congregational Sunday School also discussed his visit, and spoke of him as a man who was not only original in his thoughts but in his actions. The fact that the new rector had visited the town on a Sunday, wearing a knicker-bocker suit of brown Harris tweeds, pending his acceptance of the living, and had made all sorts of inquiries about the life of the people, was to say the least of it, out of the ordinary.

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Thus it came about that people belonging to other churches made their way up the hill to the old parish church that morning, and many pews which had not been occupied for years were filled with eager listeners. Even Dick Grimshaw, who usually played golf on Sunday mornings, joined the worshippers that day.

"I don't like the chap," said Grimshaw to the man with whom he meant to have played that morning, "but I want to see what kind of a fist he makes of it."

"You know him then?" queried Tom Dowdswell, the man to whom he spoke.

"I have met him a time or two," replied Dick. "I saw him first at Wentworth. I went up to see Tammy, and I found him there. A fellow called Nick Trebartha brought him over from Ben's Cross to spy out the land, and Tammy, being the patroness of the living, had of course to invite him to Wentworth."

"But why don't you like him?"

"Not my sort of a chap," replied Dick. "For that matter I shouldn't be surprised if he causes trouble."

"Why should he cause trouble?"

"Well, although he didn't talk much when I was there, he struck me as being an interfering sort of fellow. He is one of those chaps who possess what may be called a personality, and if I summed him up correctly he will want to impose his will upon other people."

"He is Cornish, isn't he?"

"It seems so. Godolphin is an old Cornish name, and I hear that his mother thinks a great deal of it. My people were not favourably impressed by the old dame when they went to call on her," he added.

"Why?"

"Oh, she seemed to look upon them as belonging to a different class. However, she didn't cut much ice with them, they quickly told her what they thought of old families."

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Be that as it may, however, there was quite a good congregation at the parish church on the first Sunday after David's induction, and on the whole, he made a favourable impression. Although, like many Yorkshire provincial towns, Gildershaw was in the main nominally Nonconformist, the parish church was still regarded as the official centre of religious life, and as Mr. Whitecross, during the latter part of his ministry, had aroused but little interest, many welcomed the young man's message. Not that David, in the ordinary sense of the term, could be called a preacher ; his sermon was largely made up of commonplaces, and at no time did he strike a deep note. Still, he was an educated, presentable, and evidently a well brought up young man ; and was generally regarded as having made a favourable impression. Indeed, many of the daughters of manufacturers and tradespeople, who had rarely attended church for the last few years, got quite excited about him, and spoke of him as having a charming personality.

For the first few weeks the new rector caused quite a flutter in the town, and many of the old parishioners began to hope for better days. Not that the congregations of the first Sunday were repeated ; they were, of course, special and intended to give the new rector a "good send off," as they termed it. Nevertheless, there was a general improvement. Church people, whose interest in church matters had nearly died out, began to attend more regularly. Pews which had been but rarely occupied were better filled, while going to church was not regarded as "such a bore" as in the old days. David, who had a good deal of musical ability, gave much attention to the choir, and the Yorkshire people, being essentially musical, appreciated his labours. He also started a Confirmation class to which all young people were invited. As a consequence, some twenty or thirty boys and girls found their way to the rectory week by week in order to receive religious instruction.

After Christmas however, there was what was called "a

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slump." The congregations fell off in a marked degree, while the Confirmation classes became less and less well attended.

It so happened that toward the latter part of November, and through the whole of December the weather had been unusually fine ; and as the road leading from the town to the old church was one of the most popular promenades in the district, the congregation might have been favourably affected. But when January had settled in, the rain fell in torrents, and a grimy, clinging, oily, fog-like mist filled the streets, thus making out of door exercise unpopular.

Whether this was the real cause or not I will not say, but certainly, after David had been in Gildershaw three months the congregations were little bigger than they were in Mr. Whitecross's last days. It is true that church life had improved, and there was a livelier interest in it; but not to a marked degree. The young men of the town rarely attended, while families of the Grimshaw order were never seen there at all. A few mill girls and a few servant girls who at times brought their sweethearts made their way thither ; but as far as the town generally was concerned, the church was not attractive. A few faithful old families kept up their attendance in the mornings, but rarely ever came in the evening.

This disturbed David greatly. As we have seen, he had been considerably exercised as to whether he should accept the offer of the living, but he had hoped, in spite of everything, that he would be able to bring new life into the dry bones of old institutions. His hopes were in vain, however, and by the end of March he almost wished he hadn't come.

"I think you are silly, David," remarked his mother one Sunday night, after he had been telling her of his disappointment. "I am sure you give more time to your parish than hundreds of other clergymen give to theirs ; while on the whole, the church is, for these days, quite respectably attended."

"You don't understand, mother," replied the young man.

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"That is what you are always saying, and I don't like it," retorted Mrs. Godolphin. "Besides I *do* understand. This is not a church-going age; that is the beginning and ending of it; and if people don't come, why should you bother? I am sure you have improved the choir greatly, in fact you have slaved in order to drill a dozen unintelligent boys to sing. You conduct the services quite nicely too, and your voice is really good. Indeed, you have quite a church voice."

"And meanwhile the town goes on as if I didn't live here at all," moaned David.

"Well, why are you bothered about that? I am sure you do a great deal more for the town than I would do. You are always taking the chair, or speaking at some function or other."

"Yes, but you don't understand, mother."

"There you go again! What don't I understand now?"

"Well, it is this way. Here is Gildershaw, with getting on for twenty thousand people in it, and the old parish church doesn't seem to affect the town at all. We have over a thousand sittings, but only a handful of people attend. Besides, what good am I? Who takes any notice of me?"

"From what I am told the chapels are just as bad," retorted the old dame. "Not that I sympathize with them," she added. "I hate these schismatic places in the parish; still, there it is. I suppose some of the chapels hold quite as many people, if not more than the parish church, and they are just as empty. It isn't worse than the others, so why trouble?"

"Yes," cried David almost passionately, "and meanwhile, boys and girls, young men and women, are drifting to paganism, drifting to the devil."

"Well, you can't help it if they are."

"But I *ought* to help it," cried the young man. "The churches ought to mean something in the life of the town, but as far as I can see they mean nothing."

"That is all nonsense," replied Mrs. Godolphin irritably.

"Besides, if there is anything in it, it is no wonder."

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“Why is it no wonder?”

“Why, think of that girl, the patroness of the living, who never comes near the place. I saw her in the Hall pew on the first two Sundays after you were inducted, but since then she has never been. How can you expect the common people to come when she stays away?”

David was silent.

“What’s more, I don’t like the way she treats us. It is true she invited us up to the Hall to dinner soon after we came, but since then we have heard nothing from her. There ought always to be a close intimacy between the Hall and the rectory.”

Still David remained silent.

“There is a great deal of gossip about her,” went on the old lady.

“What gossip?” asked David quickly.

“I hear that she has so far forgotten herself as to become engaged to that fellow Grimshaw. Such things ought not to be allowed. In my young days a girl belonging to a good family—and I’ll admit that the Rashleighs are a good family—would never think of allowing herself to be associated with people like the Grimshaws. I know they are wealthy, but after all what’s money?”

“It means a jolly lot in Yorkshire anyhow,” laughed David.

“Still, if she had any proper pride she would never have anything to do with a fellow like that. Have you seen her lately?”

“No,” replied David. “I heard some time ago that she had left Wentworth. I suppose she is in London.”

“Ah, that accounts.”

“Accounts for what?”

“Never mind,” said the old lady significantly. “David, you ought to stop it.”

“Stop what?”

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The old lady looked at her son attentively for some seconds, but remained silent.

A few days after this David happened to be visiting in the town when, passing by one of the factories, he saw Dick Grimshaw coming out. At first the young rector thought Dick was going to pass him by with a cool nod, but after he had gone a few steps he heard him speaking.

"I say! Parson!"

David turned, and saw that the young manufacturer was making his way towards him.

"I didn't know you were a golfer," Dick said, rather awkwardly. "Why have you hidden your light under a bushel?"

"I didn't know I had."

"But you have. Tom Dowdswell told me that he had a round with you last Saturday, and that you played like a professional. Why don't you join our club? I would be glad to propose you."

"I seem to have no time for golf," replied David. "The work of a parish like this is no make-believe."

"Damn the parish!" cried Dick. "There is no reason why you can't put in at least three afternoons a week at golf."

"I'm afraid I can't do that."

"Of course you can. I'll tell you what, you don't understand us Yorkshire people."

"No, I am afraid I don't," replied David, a little sadly.

"Of course you don't. Yorkshire people can't be beaten, but if there is one thing they can't stand, it is a parson always on their doorsteps. South country people may be different, but with us, if a parson sticks to his job that is enough."

"But surely visiting the people is his job."

"Nonsense man! As long as he is in his place on Sundays, attends to parish meetings, and all that kind of thing, it's all that's expected of him. Why shouldn't a parson enjoy himself just as much as other people do? No one will think any the more of you for being at everyone's beck and call.

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You don't find the congregations any bigger, do you, because you go visiting the people ? ”

“ I have not seen you at church anyhow,” David evaded.

“ No, nor you won't. I usually spend my Sundays on the golf links ; besides, I am not cut after that pattern. I went the first Sunday just to sample you, but I am not a churchy chap. If the people must be visited, I would, if I were you, pay a curate to do it. From what I can hear, you get a good screw, and even if you don't, there would be lots of us who would be willing to pay for a curate. For that matter, I expect Miss Rashleigh would come down handsomely. By the way, have you been up to the Hall lately ? ”

“ No,” replied David, and he felt sure that Dick had reached the point in the conversation at which he had been aiming.

“ Have you seen her ? ”

“ No, not for a long time. I heard that she was in London.”

“ She has gone to London once or twice,” replied Dick, “ but she is home most of the time. I go to the Hall a good deal,” he added significantly.

David was not pleased with himself for uttering the words which next passed his lips, but he spoke before he was aware.

“ You told me some months ago that you were engaged to her,” he said.

“ I didn't quite say that, did I ? ” Dick responded, with a self-satisfied smile. “ If I did, I withdraw it ; although of course——”

He did not finish the sentence, but looked at David as much as to say, “ it is all settled, although it is not yet announced.”

“ Did you say that Miss Rashleigh was at home now ? ” asked the young rector.

“ Yes, she came home last night. She had some important business to transact in which I was helping her,” he replied in tones of confidence. “ But look here, I mean what I say, parson,” and he seemed anxious to change the subject. “ If

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I were you, I should let the parish go hang for a bit. The people are just as well without you as with you. The church people are not like the chapel lot, who always want a parson to fetch and carry for them. Have a good time, man ! You are not an old dodderer like Whitecross was, and there are hosts of people around who have dances and parties to which they would be only too glad to welcome you. Look here, won't you have a round of golf with me ? I don't know whether I am up to your mark or not, but I am pretty useful. It is no good my asking you to play on Sunday afternoon, I suppose, but what do you say to Saturday ? ”

“ I am afraid it is impossible,” replied the young rector. “ I have a funeral, and——”

“ Hang the funeral ! ” cried Dick, turning on his heel. “ Well, if you can't, you can't, I suppose ; but anyhow you can come into the club and have a drink now, can't you ? ”

“ I'm afraid I can't,” replied David ; “ but I will be glad to have a round of golf with you some day,” and leaving the young manufacturer he made his way towards the rectory.

But he did not go far. Looking at his watch he saw that it was just half-past three, and then after a moment's hesitation he turned into the road which led to Wentworth Hall.

Why he did this he could scarcely tell. He had seen practically nothing of Tamsin since coming to Gildershaw, and he gathered from the way she had spoken to him on the two occasions they had met, that she was annoyed with him for his freedom of speech on the night she had come to the rectory. Moreover, if what his mother had said was true, he had done no good. She had evidently made up her mind to marry Grimshaw, and thus his advice was wasted.

“ I cannot understand it,” he reflected, as he trudged his way along the drive. “ She, in spite of her unconventional ways, is a lady ; while Grimshaw is nothing short of a bounder. How such a girl could ever think of——”

He could not finish the sentence even in his own mind. The

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thought to him was horrible, but there was no accounting for the ways of women.

"Well, this is kind of you," the girl greeted him when presently he made his appearance. "I was contemplating having my tea alone, and felt as vinegary as an old maid in consequence. Sit you down, as we Yorkshire folks say, and make yourself at home."

David sat down, but making himself at home was a different matter. He could not help feeling awkward and restrained in the girl's presence, and for a few minutes conversation dragged; then, after an almost painful silence, Tamsin said:

"Well, how are you liking Gildershaw?"

"Not at all," he replied. "I think I am sorry I ever came to it."

"But why, my dear man?"

"Because I am not fit for my job."

The girl looked at him attentively for a few seconds, and then burst out:

"You are not wanting to be told what a fine preacher you are, are you? You don't want to be flattered, and hear it said that your sermons are works of art; and that you are the best possible rector for the parish?"

"For God's sake don't talk like that!" he replied almost savagely. "I hope I am not such a fool as that; but I am bothered, I really am."

"Why?"

"Because I am a failure. Oh—I know you can say that things are better than they were, and perhaps with truth; but the fact of it is, the parish church—all the churches for that matter—count for little or nothing in the life of the town. Religion seems dead."

"Of course it does," replied Tamsin quietly. "It *seems* dead because it *is* dead. It is still a respectable institution, and a few old-fashioned people believe that it can remain for ever; but it won't. The day for that sort of thing is gone."

"You don't really mean that, Miss Rashleigh?"

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"Of course I do. I told you before you came that I was a heathen, and that I hadn't an atom of faith in what you are supposed to believe."

"And yet you pleaded with me to come?"

"I know I did. The Church of England still remains a respectable institution in the land, and in a way it is necessary. But what it stands for is fast dying out."

David was silent for nearly a minute, then he burst out almost angrily:

"What you are saying is a lie, a black, hideous lie."

"Is it?" retorted Tamsin with a laugh. "Then why are you so woebegone? No, no, you know that what I say is true. Churches are still interesting, just as museums and all that sort of thing is interesting, but as for any living, vital use, the less said of them the better."

"Then what would you advise me to do?"

"Have a good time," replied the girl quietly. "After all, things are not so bad. There are a number of very nice people in the town who would be glad to welcome you, and on the whole I think Gildershaw is a very pleasant place to live in. The Church also is a very good institution and of course you can carry on just as if people believed in the things you teach. In a way you can do good. There are lots of people who still like to be talked to as you are expected to talk to them. You could also start a Literary Society in the town; we need one very badly, and you, with your education and associations, could become its president. You could also establish a Church Dramatic Society. Lots of the young people are fond of acting; and you could get up all sorts of entertainments. The Church could in that way become a more and more useful institution. Then if I were you I should establish a Church Social Club where you could have bridge parties, dances, and that sort of thing."

David started to his feet, and paced the room like a man in wrath.

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“ I would rather crack stones beside the road than regard my profession in that light,” he almost shouted.

The girl watched him like one amused. Whether she believed in what she said or not I do not profess to know, but she evidently enjoyed the conversation.

“ You remember the afternoon when I first came to this house ? ” he asked.

“ Very well. Do you know, Mr. Godolphin, I liked you from the very first. Of course I didn’t know you, but I felt that you would be an acquisition to the life of the town. Old Mr. Whitecross was in reality dead years before he died, and although he droned out the services Sunday by Sunday, he counted for nothing ; but you, with your education, your upbringing, your youth, and your social qualities could, I believed, make the place a bit more pleasant.”

“ Good God,” cried David. “ Is that what you think of my calling ? ”

“ What else can one think ? You see, I am being perfectly frank with you.”

He did not speak for a minute or more, but continued pacing the room.

“ You remember that girl Emily Dixon ? ” he said presently.

“ Yes, what of her ? ”

“ Did you visit her, and find out more about her ? ”

“ Yes,” replied Tamsin, looking out of the window, “ but she wouldn’t listen to me.”

“ I have been to see her mother this afternoon,” said David ; “ she is broken-hearted. She told me that her husband also is broken down by the disgrace which his daughter has brought on him. I don’t think I ever saw a more piteous sight than that of Mrs. Dixon, sobbing in her misery.”

“ Have you seen Emily ? ” asked Tamsin. “ Do you know what has become of her ? ”

“ Yes, I have seen her. Her life has become a tragedy.”

“ In what way ? ”

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"She went to live with the man Brogden, who has since left her; now she has taken up with another fellow and gone to live with him. She was drunk when I called on her," he added.

"Drunk?" repeated the girl.

"Yes, she has seemingly lost all self-respect, and doesn't care what happens to her."

He continued to pace the room, while a far-away look came into his eyes.

"That kind of thing," he went on presently, "appears to be happening all over the town. Not perhaps in the same way, but there is a general drift towards immorality. Ethical standards are being lowered, and life is being poisoned."

"Well, don't look so miserable about it, man," and the girl tried to laugh as she spoke.

"But I *am* miserable!" cried David. "How can one live as I do in a comfortable rectory, and be looked upon as a kind of representative of Jesus Christ, all the while knowing that one's calling seems a mockery, without being miserable? To me it is ghastly, positively ghastly!"

"But *you* can't help it, my dear man. Whatever may be the truth about your religion, you can only do what you are doing."

"Can't I?" cried David. "Before I came here I spent a night talking with Nick Trebartha and his wife. Do you know what Nick said to me? He said this: 'Either religion is the greatest thing in the world, or it is the most shrivelled-up mockery ever invented. Either a clergyman's profession is the most magnificent and mighty thing that could be thought of, or it is the worn-out relic of an ignorant age.' I didn't believe it at the time, but now I can see that he spoke the truth. Well, which is it? Is it the greatest thing in the world, or is it a shrivelled-up mockery? Is my calling the grandest thing that can be thought of, or is it the mere bolstering up of a pretence?"

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Tamsin was silent. When she saw the look on David's face, she felt she could not utter the flippant words which sprang to her lips. Neither of them spoke for nearly a minute, and then David, seemingly forgetful of his question, asked another :

"Miss Rashleigh," he said, "are you going to marry that man Grimshaw ?"

"Surely that is my own business, Mr. Godolphin."

"It is mine too," David replied.

"Why ? Because you are a clergyman, and because you are the rector of the parish ?"

"Not only that," replied David.

"Why then ?"

"Because if you marry him it would be in many respects a repetition of the Emily Dixon affair," he said savagely.

The girl's eyes blazed with anger, and her lips quivered, but she did not speak.

"Yes, I know what you feel," cried David. "You feel that it is rank impertinence on my part to say such a thing ; perhaps it is ; but I can't help it. Besides, you remember what you said to me."

"What did I say to you ?"

"You said you didn't love him ; that you were incapable of love," replied David. "Whether Christianity is dead or not ; whether my profession is a mockery or not, I am going to say my say. Marriage without love is beastly, it is degrading, it is hellish !"

The girl held herself in check. At one time she seemed on the point of bursting out in angry and scathing speech, but she refrained.

"Who said I was going to marry Dick Grimshaw ?" she asked presently.

"It is the talk of the town," he replied. "Besides, I saw him this afternoon and asked him point-blank if you were engaged."

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"Well, what did he say?"

"He gave me to understand that you were. He told me that he was up here last night."

"Well, what if he was?"

"You mustn't, that's all."

"I mustn't what?"

"Marry that man;—you mustn't think of it!"

"By what right do you dare to say that?"

"I don't know," replied David. "I never meant to say a word about it when I came this afternoon."

"Why did you come?"

"I don't know. The thought came to me, something seemed to compel me, and so I came. But mind, Miss Rashleigh," and his voice had a terrible tensivity in it, "it would be a sin against Almighty God for you to marry that man."

"It would be interesting to know why."

"First, because you told me you don't love him, and marriage without love is a mockery and a crime; but more than that, he isn't fit for you."

"And why, if I may ask?" her voice was icily cold by this time.

"Because he is not only a bounder, but a savage. He has not an ideal in his make-up; he is just a well-fed, gross animal, and although he has the veneer of education, and money to burn, he is no more fit to marry you than Bill Sykes would be fit to marry Joan of Arc."

The girl's face worked convulsively, evidently she was fighting with a mad passion.

"Thank you, Mr. Godolphin," she said. "You have helped me to make up my mind."

David looked at her like one bewildered.

"Yes," she went on, "you have helped me to make up my mind. Before you came I think I had practically decided not to marry him, although I was in doubt, but you have decided me to accept him. I suppose I am a bundle of contradictions,

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but when such as you command me in one way, I immediately go the other. That is why I shall marry him."

David walked straight towards her until they stood face to face.

"I forbid it!" he almost shouted. "I command you to give up any thought of such a thing! It is at your peril that you disobey me."

The girl laughed in his face.

"Mr. Godolphin," she said quietly, "I shall go my own way,—the way I have chosen. And would you mind my remarking that I have to dress for dinner. Good night."

David stood looking at her for a few seconds without speaking, then realizing the purport of her words he left the room.

"Good night," he said, as he closed the door behind him.

A minute later he was tramping down the drive towards the town. His heart was thumping violently, his head was in a whirl; for some time he scarcely realized where he was.

"My God!" he said aloud presently. "Now I know why I acted like a fool. I am in love; in love with Tamsin Rashleigh, and if ever I had a chance, I have destroyed it by my madness."

CHAPTER XI

THE VISION AND THE REALITY

WHEN David reached the Rectory he sat for a long time alone, thinking. Nothing had seemed to have happened, and yet his life had become revolutionized. When he had left the rectory just after lunch that day, he decided to pay a round of visits, without ever imagining that anything would happen out of the ordinary ; and yet in a few hours the whole trend of his thoughts, the whole purpose of his life appeared to have changed.

And yet what had taken place ? Nothing apparently. He tried to recall the actual happenings since he had left the rectory.

First, there was his visit to Emily Dixon's mother. The poor woman was wellnigh mad with grief. Her daughter's life was disgraced and ruined. Emily had become a by-word in the town ; and she, the mother, was helpless. She had pleaded with him to do something ; what, she could not tell, but something. And David remembered that he had listened to her with a feeling of utter helplessness in his heart. He promised Mrs. Dixon that he would call on her daughter, and had immediately made his way to Emily's cottage ; but there also he had been helpless. The girl was so much under the influence of drink that she was unable to speak to him connectedly. He had thought of Christ, who with a word had driven the unclean spirit out of a man ; but he, David Godolphin, who professed to be Christ's ambassador could do nothing.

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Then, later in the afternoon, came his meeting with Dick Grimshaw. Only the most ordinary things had been said, and yet every word had seemed laden with destiny. Dick, smug, prosperous, well-dressed, self-satisfied ; yet so coarse and commonplace that he would be passed by in any crowd, had become a factor in his life, a force which he could not understand.

After that came his visit to Wentworth Hall which seemed to him like a mad dream. He tried to remember what Tamsin had said to him, called to mind the look on her face as she offered cheap and cynical advice about his work. Never, surely, had the patroness of a living held her responsibilities so lightly. After that had followed his own blazing indiscretion. He had actually taken it upon himself to dictate to her what she should do, and what she should not do. Of course, regarded from one standpoint it was the rankest impertinence ; but he had not been able to help himself. The words had seemingly passed his lips before they were born in his mind.

And the reason why ?

That of course was the epitome of madness, but again he could not help himself. He had not thought of falling in love with Tamsin Rashleigh, and yet his love had gripped his whole being, held him a bond slave.

Of course he must destroy it ; the whole thing was madness. From every standpoint it was madness. Even if she had cared for him the thing was utterly impossible. He was a clergyman, and she was a flippant sceptic. He was almost penniless except for what he received as rector of the parish, while she was rich beyond the dreams of avarice ; but above all, she had according to her own declaration decided to marry Dick Grimshaw.

His mother was not at the rectory ; she was visiting an old friend who lived somewhere near York, and thus he was alone. Presently the dinner-gong sounded, and after a

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pretence of eating he returned to his study again. He tried to decide what to do, tried to order the course of his life. Of course he mustn't think about Tamsin Rashleigh. The very idea of his love was born in Bedlam, and must be destroyed.

But he had his life to live. He remembered that he was a clergyman, that he had taken Holy Orders, and that he had come to Gildershaw as rector. What should he do ?

Three courses stood out before him. First of all he could resign the living; he could write to the bishop and tell him of his decision ; indeed, he could cease being a clergyman at all. His mother had enough to live on, and he could go away to a new country, Canada, Australia or Africa, and earn a living like any other man. But no, that would not do. He felt that it would be the act of a coward, that he would be running away from the work which needed doing. Besides, in spite of what he had said, he was beginning to love this Yorkshire town, beginning to be interested in the life of the people. Why, then, should he run away ? Such an act would break his mother's heart. He knew her pride, knew how she rejoiced in the fact that she was the mother of the rector of Gildershaw. No, he would stay.

Then a second alternative appeared before him. He could follow the advice both of Grimshaw and of Tamsin ; he could do the work of the parish in a perfunctory way as thousands of other clergymen were doing ; and he could become a social force in the town. He could take up golf again and, following Dick Grimshaw's advice, spend two or three afternoons a week on the links. He could also go into such society as there was, and generally have a good time. Well, why not ? He was young, he was fond of pleasure, and he knew that a hundred doors would be open to him. Then he thought of the Emily Dixons of the town ; of the girls and boys, many of whom were drifting to mere animalism. He remembered how thousands seemed to have no higher thought than drinking, card playing, gambling, and a life of sin.

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And all the time he would be rector of the parish ! No, no, that would not do.

A third way appeared to him. He thought of what Nick Trebartha had said to him on the night he had first come North. Nick seemed sure of the truths of Christianity. To him it was the greatest thing on earth ; the one paramount need of the world. For a moment he saw a vision of what might be, what ought to be. He saw the whole town of Gildershaw inspired by the spirit of Jesus Christ. He saw young men, their hearts aflame with new and higher purposes. He saw employers thinking not only of their own gain, but of the well-being of the people they employed. He saw employees not everlastingly playing the game of grab, but seeking only what was right and just. He saw a better order of things generally.

His heart burned at the thought of it. Could he not get to the bed-rock of the whole business of Christianity, and make the town realize what Jesus Christ meant ? Could he not be the means of making it a vital and flaming reality ?

For a time he was carried away with the idea, but presently it seemed as though a cold hand were laid upon him. Was it possible to do this ? Others had tried and failed. Who was he, David Godolphin, to become the pioneer of a new life ? For that matter he was not sure of anything ; he only half believed that what he saw as in a vision could be realized. Besides, no one wanted a new order of things ; no one seemed to believe in it. Pleasure, gain, success were the order of the day, while dancing, card playing, gambling, drinking, and sensual delights were the things people wanted. To the great mass of the people Christianity was a back number. It was something that had had its day, and was ceasing to be.

And yet *something* was necessary ! Some great, living, vital reality which would make the people see the meaning and purpose of life.

He thought of the old prophet Elijah who appeared before

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Ahab, the King, and told him that he had forsaken the commandments of the Lord, that through him the whole nation had drifted to idolatry ; and because they had drifted to idolatry they were becoming submerged by the vices of heathenism.

Yes, but he, David Godolphin was not another Elijah. He had not the courage to condemn the sins of the time, neither did he realize as Elijah realized, that there was a power behind him which could save the people from their sins.

But it was a great story. It might not be true, but it was great. He pictured the old prophet standing alone before the assembled hosts of the people ; saw him laying the wood on the altar ; heard him challenging the King, as well as the prophets of Baal. " The God that answereth by fire, let Him be God ! "

But no, he was not another Elijah ; he could not do these things. Besides, the age of miracles was over. Therefore the only thing for him to do was to continue his work in the old conventional way, and hope for the best.

With that thought in his mind, David went to bed. He was no orator, he had no extraordinary powers, he was not cast in a heroic mould ; he was simply a commonplace young man who would try to do his work in a commonplace way.

* * * *

For some weeks nothing happened worthy of record. The life of the town went on in its old way, and nothing out of the ordinary took place.

Not that David's life was unaffected by what I have described. It was. Realizing as he did that his presence in the town seemed to mean nothing, he thought hard as to how his position as rector could become more effectual, and how the parish Church could become a greater factor in the life of the community. But nothing was done. Congregations did not increase, neither was there a growing interest in the things he stood for.

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As for Tamsin, he never saw her. He reflected that she had practically ordered him out of her house, and that he would not be a welcome visitor. Therefore, though his madness seemed to increase rather than otherwise, he made no attempt to see her.

One day in June he made his way to the tennis courts, having decided to spend the afternoon there. Winter had now gone, and as the day was particularly fine, he determined to make the most of it. A number of young people had gathered, and David was not long in entering with zest into the pleasure of the afternoon.

The Gildershaw Tennis Club was regarded as being the most select gathering in the town. Most of what were called the best families were members of it, and were looked upon as the *élite*. Not that David cared about this. As a social factor it meant nothing to him, but as a means of indulging in a game that he loved, he welcomed its existence.

Tamsin Rashleigh was not there, and on inquiry he found that she did not belong to the club, neither was she ever known to put in an appearance.

"I expect she regards herself as a cut above us," his informant told him, "anyhow, she is not a member, and she never comes."

"I see Mr. Grimshaw is here," remarked David, looking around among the players.

"Yes, Dick generally turns up," replied the girl to whom he was speaking. "He is one of our best players," then looking shyly towards David she said: "I heard him say a few minutes ago that he was going to challenge you."

"Indeed," replied David, "from what I can see of it he could wipe the floor with me. This is the first time I have played for two years, and I am in anything but good form."

"Well, he is going to challenge you, anyhow," said the girl. "He has got a bet on with Tom Dowdswell that he will beat

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you two sets out of three. Doesn't he like you, Mr. Godolphin ? ”

“ Why shouldn't he ? ” asked David, looking at the girl inquiringly.

“ I don't know why he shouldn't,” she said, “ but I don't believe he does.”

The girl, Alice Lister by name, belonged to what was called the “ upper crust ” in the town, and while she was not particularly intelligent, she struck David as a sensible girl.

Before he had time to consider the significance of what she had said to him, Dick Grimshaw, who had finished his set, made his way to the spot where David sat.

“ Hullo, parson ! ” Dick greeted him in a free and easy manner, “ so you have deigned to honour us with your presence. You never fulfilled your promise to play that round of golf with me, but I am glad to see you here. Are you any good at tennis ? ”

“ I used to be pretty useful at one time,” replied David, “ but I am frightfully out of practice. To-day is the first time I have touched a racket for two years, and I am afraid I have made a howling mess of it.”

“ Yes, I saw you were faring rather badly just now,” replied Dick, and then as with a set purpose of being rude he went on : “ You let down your partner badly, too.”

“ I am afraid I did,” replied David ; “ but she was very kind, and took all the blame on herself.”

“ Trust Minnie for that,” laughed Dick. “ She was always a parson's man, and seems to believe that they have some special sanctity. Come now, Minnie, own up. Don't you believe that they have ? ”

A number of young people had gathered around as if in expectation of hearing something spicy. The truth was, during the afternoon, Dick had said several uncomplimentary things about David, and when the young rector and Minnie

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Crowther had been beaten in a set of doubles, he declared it was David's fault.

"Anyhow, you do not believe it," laughed David.

"I am dashed if I do!" replied Dick. "Parsons are not a bit better than other people—if as good." He accompanied the last words with a jeering laugh which raised a titter among the listeners.

David said nothing, although he was a little irritated, not only by Dick's words, but by the tone in which he uttered them.

"Of course, I mean nothing personal," went on Dick, "but if there is anything I detest, it is the sanctimonious, goody-goody parson. What I like is a *man*," and he laid emphasis upon the word. "A man with grit and courage," and he looked rather contemptuously towards David.

"What is the meaning of this I wonder?" reflected the young rector, "evidently he is in a bad temper."

"I expect parsons have their uses the same as other people," he remarked good humouredly.

"What are they?" asked Dick. "I am blessed if I know." Then looking around on the group which had gathered, he went on: "Do you remember that day last year when the curate of St. Michael's challenged me at tennis? I never enjoyed anything so much in my life."

"Yes, I remember." It was Dick's friend, Tom Dowdswell, who spoke. "You swept the floor with him. He didn't have a look in. He was pretty boastful of his prowess before he started too," he added.

St. Michael's Church, while not in the parish of Gildershaw, was situated in a corner of the town, and drew its congregations largely from David's parish. Mr. Hopwood, the man Dick referred to, was a High Church curate there, and had been much talked about because of his repeated assertions that the Reformation was a crime, and that it was his duty to destroy its evil effects.

"I wonder whether the rector of Gildershaw would fare

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better than the curate of St. Michael's if he played with you," suggested Dowdswell. "What do you say to taking on Dick, Mr. Godolphin?"

It was clumsily done, and David was not slow, especially in the light of what Alice Lister had told him, to understand what it meant.

"Will you, parson?" asked Grimshaw with a laugh. "I would like to see the stuff you are made of."

David gave him a quick look, and summed him up at a glance. He had noticed his play during the afternoon; and saw that while he was thick-set and rather clumsily built, he was a powerful player. He had learnt from Alice Lister, too, that he was looked upon as the champion of the Gildershaw club.

"I am afraid I shall make a poor show of it," he said. "As I told you, I haven't touched a racket for more than two years, but I'll have a shot at it if you like."

"That's good," exclaimed Grimshaw in a tone of satisfaction. "We will have three sets, and the one who gets the best of the rubber wins, eh?"

"All right," cried David.

"Like to have a quid on it?" Dick asked.

"A quid?"

"Yes, a pound, then, if you like,—something to make it interesting."

David was sorely tempted but, remembering that he was the rector of the parish, he refused. He had planned to preach a sermon on the evils of gambling, and he did not want to do anything to nullify the force of what he might say. Besides, knowing that the gambling spirit had laid its stranglehold upon the town, he was anxious to avoid even the appearance of evil.

"No, I would rather play for love," he replied.

"Haven't got much faith in yourself, eh?" laughed the Yorkshireman.

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"Perhaps not," laughed David.

"But I have," said Dowdswell. "I'll back the parson to the extent of a quid."

"Good," replied Grimshaw, "and I will bet two quid that the third set is not necessary to decide the rubber. Will you take me, Tom?"

"Done!" replied Dowdswell.

By this time not only the players but the visitors knew what was taking place, and all gathered around what was called the Premier Court, to watch the duel.

David fared rather badly during the first games. He had taken but little exercise for some time, and as he had said, it was a long time since he had touched a racket. Grimshaw, on the other hand was in fine condition. Throughout the whole winter he had played a good deal of golf, and in addition to this had joined the Gildershaw Football Team in many of its matches. As we have said, he was a thick-set, muscular, and powerful man, and having played tennis ever since the season commenced had everything in his favour.

Still David was no mean opponent. His muscles might be soft, but he was an old Oxford Tennis Blue, and had more than once played for the 'Varsity. Thus, while he fared rather badly during the first three games, he was not slow in picking up Dick's tricks. As the set went on, too, his old skill rapidly came back to him, and while Grimshaw won the first three games, he won them only by hard fighting. He kept on smiling however, and played hard, but it was soon evident that he had found his master. By the time they had ended the sixth game, they were three all and the final result was soon prophesied.

As we said at the beginning of this narrative, David was keen on all games. He had a sportsman's eye, and not only a sportsman's eye, but a sportsman's temper. He met every loss with a laugh, and while never missing a chance he maintained a complete good humour.

Thus it came about that Grimshaw's lack of knowledge

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of the *finesse* of the game ; also the fact that he rapidly lost control over himself, told so heavily against him, that in spite of his bad beginning, David won the first two sets, and therefore the rubber.

"Thank you, Grimshaw," cried the young rector, leaping lightly over the net, and making his way towards his opponent, "you play a jolly strong game. I had all the luck, but by jove you are a hard hitter." He held out his hand as he spoke which Grimshaw shook gingerly.

"We will have another round some day, parson, and then, perhaps, I will fare better."

"Delighted," cried David. "By jove, I am tired, and I am in a lather of sweat. I must change my clothes, and get back to the rectory too ! I have an engagement in a little more than an hour."

"Where is that two quid, Dick ?" asked Dowdswell with hilarity. "By jove, the parson gave you a doing all right. The laugh is all on his side."

"It will be all on mine before I finish with him," muttered Dick as he went away with Dowdswell.

David, without waiting for the congratulations of the watchers, made his way towards the pavilion, and soon after found himself in the dressing-room where he proceeded to change. He had not been there more than two minutes before half a dozen girls, whose duty it was to provide tea, were gossiping on the events of the afternoon ; and David, who was only separated from them by a thin wooden partition heard every word plainly.

"We must make haste," said one ; "we are late as it is. We got so interested in watching the match that we forgot our work. But isn't Mr. Godolphin a dear ?"

"Now, Emily, you mustn't get falling in love with him."

"I shall if I want to, and I say he *is* a dear. I could have shouted when he polished off Dick Grimshaw."

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"I say, wasn't Dick mad? He will never forgive Mr. Godolphin."

"Well, he shouldn't have challenged him. Mr. Godolphin didn't want to play."

"I never thought Dick would be beaten; he has always carried everything before him, and we looked upon him as invincible."

"I wonder what Tamsin Rashleigh will say when she hears about it?"

"She will never hear about it."

"I will take care that she does. I bet someone will send a note to the *Gildershaw Express*. Oh, she will hear of it right enough."

"Well, what if she does? She will not care anything about it."

"Oh yes, she will. She is nuts on Dick, or at least he says so."

"Do you believe there is any truth in all the talk there's been about them. I can't believe she's serious."

"Why not? Dick is as good as she is."

"Yes, but my dear girl, think of all the affairs Dick has had already. Why there was Polly Ranny, and Fanny Prout and Maria Pollard. You remember the scandal there was."

"Oh, I know he is not a saint; but what young man is? They are all alike; for that matter, I like a man who has a bit of the devil in him. I believe Tamsin Rashleigh does too. Good gracious, why shouldn't he have his fling?"

"That may be, but I don't believe she would like it."

"That's all wind, she is no better than the rest of us. She isn't tied down to old-fashioned ideas any more than you or I. I believe in young men having their fling;—and young women too for that matter. Girls should have exactly the same liberties that boys have."

"Now, Emily, don't talk so loud."

"Why not? there is no one listening; besides, it is no

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secret. We girls don't pretend to be saints any more than Dick Grimshaw does."

"Of course, everyone knows that Dick Grimshaw is a regular Don Juan; only perhaps Tamsin Rashleigh, as she doesn't belong to our gang, has never heard of it."

"Oh tommy rot! She doesn't live in a nunnery any more than we do."

"Anyhow, I am glad Dick had a licking to-day; it may do him good. Perhaps it will teach him not to be insulting to clergymen again."

"How was he insulting?"

"You heard what he said."

"What did he say?"

"Well, he as good as said that they were of no use, and that we should be just as well off without them."

"Well, shouldn't we? What good are they? What good is Mr. Godolphin? What's the town the better for him? None of our lot go to church; as for religion, we have all given it up long ago."

"That's going too far. There are some people who still believe in it."

"Yes, but who are they? Just a few old fogies, that is all. We believe in enjoying ourselves, my dear, and that is about all we do believe. Still, I suppose we must have parsons of some sort; people have to get married, and there must be somebody to christen their babies."

This was followed by a conversation which I will not set down, but which came to David as a revelation. He had listened to what had been said without realizing that he was to an extent playing the part of an eavesdropper. For that matter the conversation had been general, and although his name had been used freely, there seemed no reason why he should tell this bevy of girls that he heard what they were saying; but what followed shocked him. To hear educated young girls, brought up amidst supposedly refined associations, declare that

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they regarded marriage as an unnecessary institution, and to say that any girl married or unmarried, was a fool to have children, opened his eyes in a way they had not been opened before.

By the time he had changed his clothes however, the conversation had ceased. People from outside had come into the pavilion for tea, and there was a general hubbub of voices. David did not stay to tea however; seeing that there was a back entrance to the dressing-room, he left the pavilion without joining the others, and found his way to the rectory.

"So that is the morality of the modern girl," he reflected, as he made his way through the streets. "That is what girls of to-day are thinking, is it? But surely that kind of thing can't represent the present attitude of mind." The thought had scarcely passed through his mind when turning the corner of a street he met Mr. Hopwood, the ritualistic curate of St. Michael's.

"Ah Mr. Godolphin," exclaimed Hopwood, "I am lucky to meet you. Do you know, I was contemplating going up to the rectory to-night in the hope of finding you."

"Come right away," rejoined David heartily. "I haven't had any tea, and if you will join me I shall be delighted. Do you want to see me about anything particular?"

"Yes I do," replied Hopwood, and it was evident from the tones of his voice that he was excited.

CHAPTER XII

DR. BENTHAM TALKS

“**W**HAT is it ? ” asked David, as they adjourned to his study after tea.

“ I am not encroaching on your time, am I ? ” asked the curate nervously.

“ Not a bit of it. Dr. Bentham told me he hoped to call here this evening about six, and I told him I would be here to meet him ; but maybe he won't come. You know how busy he is. What is the matter, my dear fellow ? ”

“ I am bothered,” replied Hopwood, “ and although you and I don't see eye to eye, I thought I would like a chat with you.”

“ What about ? ”

“ About my work. As you know, I am curate to dear old Black, who is vicar of St. Michael's, and it happens that a part of St. Michael's parish cuts through a corner of Gildershaw town. I have been here three years,” he added.

“ Yes ? ” replied David inquiringly.

“ My predecessor was an evangelical chap,” Hopwood went on ; “ a Protestant in fact. He made very little of the Sacraments ; indeed, he was little better than a Nonconformist ; so, as Black gave me practically a free hand, I determined to revolutionize everything.”

“ And did you succeed ? ”

“ In a way, yes. Parsons, my predecessor, had worked hard, but had made no real impression on my part of the town. There was a good church as far as the building went, but it was

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as bare and as lacking in ornament as a dissenting chapel. There was not even an altar cloth," he added.

"Did he have anything like a congregation?" asked David.

"Only on special occasions, such as Sunday School Anniversaries, and that kind of thing. I don't know how many came regularly, but the church was nothing like full. Well, as I told you I determined to alter everything. I am a Catholic, and I made up my mind that the people should have a full Catholic service. I substituted sung Eucharist for ordinary Matins; I instituted early celebrations; I trained what choir there was to sing Gregorian music, and made it a living Catholic service. I had the church decorated too, and——"

He lapsed into silence at this point, and looked out of the study window as though interested in the rectory garden.

"Well, what happened then?" asked David. He was interested in the story which Hopwood was telling him, and was eager to know his experiences. "Did the congregations increase?"

"For a time they did, but presently the old-fashioned Protestants who hate Catholic usages began to find fault, and to call me names. They said I had no business in the Church of England at all, and ought to go to Rome. I took no notice of that of course, and I determined to make the Catholic faith triumphant."

"And did you?"

"That is what I can't understand, Godolphin. For more than a year, now, the church has become emptier and emptier, until I seem to be a mere voice crying in the wilderness. But that is not the worst of it. I have no influence in the life of the town. As you may have heard, I instituted Confession, and for a month or two a few people came, and I thought all was going well; but lately, with the exception of a few neurotic women, there has been no response. As for the young men and the young women, they simply don't come near me. And even that isn't the worst. The moral tone of the parish is

terrible. I need not enter into details, but things generally are bad—*bad!* Do you know what I have been thinking about?"

"Of course I don't know."

"Whether I ought not to resign. I have, really. Father Benny, the Roman Catholic Priest here, says he has no difficulty in getting his people to come to Confession, and I have been wondering whether I ought not to go over to Rome. You see, there is no doubt about Roman Orders, and while I have always maintained that the Church of England, in spite of the ghastly tragedy of the Reformation, is a part of the great Catholic Church, men like Father Benny will not admit the validity of my Orders. Yes, I see you smile. You don't believe in the Catholic attitude of mind, but there is something wrong about us, my dear fellow."

"Look here," cried David a little impatiently. "Does Father Benny's flock live on a higher moral altitude than other people? Is there less drunkenness, less gambling, less vice among the Roman Catholics than among the Protestants?"

"No, for that matter I am afraid there is more; and that is what bothers me. Of course the Catholics who in the main are Irish, belong to the poorest people in the town, and are very drunken and dissolute, but if——"

"A tree is known by its fruits," quoted David.

"Yes, but if they belong to the true Church——"

"What is the true Church? Does not the Church consist of those who follow Christ in sincerity and truth?"

"Oh I have gone into all that!" cried Hopwood impatiently. "But here is the fact: the Church is losing ground. The people pass us by. That's what is bothering me, and the worst of it is, none of us seem to be making headway. As you know, I have very little sympathy with these Non-conformist ministers, but I have talked to each and all of them, and as far as I can judge, they are all in the same boat as we

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are. The population is increasing, but the influence of the church is becoming less and less."

"And have you any remedy?" asked David.

"Yes, I think I have."

"What is it?"

"I have come to the conclusion that I have failed because I have no backing."

"No backing? Didn't you tell me that old Black gives you a free hand?"

"Yes, it isn't that," answered Hopwood quickly. "He is all right, but then you see, my parish church, where Black is vicar, doesn't influence Gildershaw at all. To all intents and purposes, my mission church is in Gildershaw, although ecclesiastically it does not belong to your parish. You must forgive me for saying so, Mr. Godolphin, but you have not supported me."

"I have nothing to do with you, my dear fellow."

"Yes, you have. You are the rector of the great parish church, and the town, as a whole, takes its cue from you. I hoped when you came that you would be a Catholic, and that the old parish church would be the centre of Catholic doctrines, and Catholic ceremonial. I looked forward to having a man who would sympathize with me, support me; but you have done nothing of the sort. As far as I can learn you are a Modernist; indeed, you are not a true churchman at all; and I tell you this, Godolphin, England is drifting into paganism because the church is filled with heresy, and because we have lost the faith once for all delivered to the Saints. We want a revival of the Catholic faith in the town."

"What is the Catholic faith?" asked David.

"Faith in the Sacraments, faith in the priesthood. Our Lord's Supreme Sacrifice should be daily celebrated."

"But you said you had done this, and still have failed."

"Yes, and why? Because the rector of Gildershaw Parish Church has stood aloof; because he has been contented with

the dry bones of Protestantism. Oh, I must say it, Godolphin, you have failed us, terribly failed us. And what is the result ? Your church, my church have no power ; their altars are neglected ; people do not communicate ; and as a consequence, the whole town is like Sodom and Gomorrah, it is drifting away from God."

There was no doubt about Hopwood's earnestness. His voice was hoarse and tremulous, while the light of a fanatic shone from his eyes.

David could not help being impressed. What he had heard at the Tennis Club that afternoon had opened his eyes to the fact that the young people of the town were drifting, not only from faith, but, as it seemed to him, from purity, while he, as rector of the parish was powerless. Was Hopwood right ? It was true, as far as he could judge, that he hadn't a real argument to support him ; but had he not put his finger upon the weakness of the Church.

"Well, what would you have me do ?" he asked.

"This," replied Hopwood ; "join me in a Holy Crusade. Let us together denounce this thing called Protestantism ; let us denounce this so-called faith which is no faith ; let us restore the full meaning of the Sacraments ; let the smoke of incense again arise in the old Church."

"But, as I said just now, you have tried this and it has failed."

"I know ! I know ! Nevertheless, I am certain that is it from that quarter salvation will come. Join me, Godolphin, join me ! Let us make a pact here and now and we will arouse the whole countryside !"

Again David looked at the ritualist searchingly ; and for a moment, so powerful is earnestness, he wondered whether there were not some truth in what he said ; but only for a moment. He thought of his own native county ; he remembered how all that Hopwood advocated had been tried. How on the death of evangelical rectors and vicars, ritualisti-

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incumbents had been installed in their parishes. And what had been the result? Had the churches been filled? Had more religious earnestness been manifested? Rather it was the other way. The churches had become emptier and emptier, while many of the old-fashioned people had been driven from the sanctuaries that they loved. What, after all, was the net result of the so-called Anglo-Catholic movement throughout the country? Was England more religious? Was faith a greater factor in the land?

No, this would not do. Something more real, more vital was needed; something that went down to the very roots of life. What it was he was not sure, but something. The early apostles had it in the early days of Christianity, John Wesley had it one hundred and fifty years ago, but it had seemed to have become a lost secret.

"Will you, Mr. Godolphin?—Will you join me? Think of what we could do together. We might kindle the fires of faith in such a way that devils would tremble."

David shook his head. "We are not living in the Middle Ages, Hopwood," he said, "but in the twentieth century. Thoughts, manners, customs have been revolutionized. For weal or for woe we live in a new age; an age of science, an age of questions, an age of criticism. People will no longer accept the old order of things, and——"

"Oh, I know! I know!" burst in Hopwood, "but meanwhile the devil of unbelief is abroad, while the present generation of young men and women care about nothing but pleasure, excitement, the gratification of the senses; and worse than all that, faith is dying."

"I am afraid there is truth in what you say," replied David, "but faith cannot be kindled by tawdry ceremonial. We cannot make an educated community believe in what their reason rejects. As you know, I came from a county where nearly two centuries ago the teachings of John Wesley revolutionized the life of the people; but many of John Wesley's doctrines

are rejected to-day. It is no use preaching an everlasting hell fire, or urging people to believe in something in order to save their souls from hell, in these days. We have to get deeper. We want the spirit, the motive power, the dynamic of John Wesley; but we want also to face facts, undeniable facts."

"But do you not believe in hell fire?" cried Hopwood. "Why, it is a cardinal doctrine of the Catholic faith!"

"It is not a question of what I believe," said David, "it is a question of what the people believe. Why, preach it to-day and you would be laughed at. The question of hell fire doesn't trouble the life of our town at all; the real question goes deeper. Ask nine out of every ten of what are called the worldlings of our time, and they will tell you that they have no faith in religion. Millions have no faith in any life beyond the grave, and I am not sure that even the Churches are vitally convinced. For that matter, there seems to be doubt whether there is a spiritual world at all; or whether there is a God above who takes any real interest in the lives of those He created. There's our real problem, Hopwood. What you suggest is merely playing at religion; what I want is to get at the heart of the whole thing."

"But you believe in God? You believe in the Spiritual world, don't you?" asked Hopwood.

"Yes," replied David, after a few seconds silence, "but is it so real to me that I can make it real to others? Up to the present I have not been able to. I have been in the parish nearly eight months now, and as yet I have only touched the fringe of my work."

Hopwood sighed deeply. Whatever hopes he had when he accompanied David to the rectory, had evidently vanished. All the same, the light of a fanatic still shone in his eyes. Intense earnestness was manifested by his quivering nostrils.

"It is no use saying I am not disappointed, Godolphin," he said. "I am." Then, turning with a quick movement

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towards David, he went on eagerly, "You don't think I should gain a new power, and a new authority by being re-ordained in the Church of Rome do you?"

"I will not answer that," replied David. "It is not for me to tell any man what he should or should not do. But you asked *me* to do something, and I, as a thinking man, must judge for myself as to whether I can do it. And I must tell you frankly, that as far as I myself am concerned, the question of Orders as you think of them, have no more real effect than the cut of my clothes. All this talk about Orders, and vestments and ritual have no more meaning to me than the fairy tales of children. Why think, man, read that sublime story of Jesus in the gospels; how much importance did He attach to these things? Take the great Magna Carta of our faith; read the Sermon on the Mount from beginning to end, and judge for yourself. How much importance did Jesus attach to the matters which you regard as vital?"

"Yes, but we have the traditions, we have Church history," cried Hopwood.

"I am afraid that doesn't help you, my dear fellow. As it happens I have read a good deal of Church history, especially during this last winter; and I find that it was only while the early Church adhered to the simple faith which the Founder of Christianity taught to his disciples, that it was really powerful. It was during those first centuries, when the early Christians had no authority but the authority of Christ; no power but the power of the Holy Spirit; when they were unsupported by armies or by the state, that they swept over Europe like a flame of fire. It was only when that early Church began to be patronized by the state, when it adopted the ritual and doctrines of the pagans of that time that it lost power."

At that moment a knock came to the door, and a servant appeared.

"Dr. Bentham has called to see you, sir."

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"All right, Mary, show him in," David said to the servant ; then turning to Hopwood he said : " I wish I could help you, my dear fellow, but I can't. As you have gathered, I am going through deep waters myself, and yet I have a belief that we are on the eve of big things."

At that moment Dr. Bentham, a big, burly, elderly man, entered the room.

" I am sorry I'm late, Godolphin," he said, " but I have been up at the Hall, and Miss Rashleigh insisted on my staying longer than I intended. How do you do, Mr. Hopwood, and how are things going down at the St. Michael's end of the town ? "

Hopwood, who was still under the influence of his conversation with David, spoke unguardedly.

" Bad, Doctor, bad. You say you have just come from the Hall. When will you see Miss Rashleigh again ? "

" Probably to-morrow," replied the doctor.

" Then will you tell her for me that landowners have their responsibilities," he cried. " Will you tell her, in my name, that many of the houses she owns near St. Michael's church are a crime and a disgrace."

" You had better speak to her steward," replied the doctor. " He manages her property."

" I have spoken to her steward, and he merely shrugs his shoulders. It is she whom I must get at. *She* is the real steward ; the steward of the *Almighty* ! "

" And a jolly good steward she is, too," laughed the doctor. " She is the finest girl I know."

Hopwood did not deign to reply ; instead he made his way out of the house.

" I was surprised to see that Merry Andrew with you," laughed the doctor, when he had gone. " I thought he regarded you as outside the pale of salvation ? "

" Perhaps I am," replied David quietly.

" He seems to have made you jolly miserable, anyhow,"

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the doctor could not help saying. "What is the matter, my dear fellow?"

"Doctor," rejoined David, looking searchingly at his visitor, "you are an old resident in Gildershaw, aren't you?"

"I have lived here nearly forty years," was the reply.

"And you know the town well?"

"I ought to."

"Your profession necessitates your visiting all classes, and of course you have a very big practice?"

"Naturally I know the town well. A man can't be a doctor in a place like this for forty years without knowing it from thread to needle."

"I want to ask you this," said David. "Has Gildershaw improved during those forty years?"

"Improved," replied the doctor thoughtfully. "Yes, in many ways it has. There is less drunkenness than there used to be, less ignorance. On the whole too, I think the people are less uncouth, less coarse."

"Then you think it is a better town than it was?"

"In some ways yes, in some ways no. I think I see what you are driving after. You, as a parson, are wanting to know whether Gildershaw is as religious as it used to be; and I will answer you frankly. No. I don't think it is; in fact I am sure it isn't; that is as religion is popularly understood. The town has nearly doubled its population since I came here, but there were more people who went to church or chapel then than there are now, and there were far more children who went to the Sunday Schools. That as you see speaks for itself. Mind you, there was, forty years ago, a considerable section of the population who were irreligious, but the proportion was not as great as it is now."

"And do you think that immorality has increased?"

"It is difficult to answer you. Open immorality was, forty years ago, confined largely to a comparatively small section

of the population, and it was looked upon by the great bulk of the people with feelings akin to horror. That is all changed now. There is, if I may so put it, a general loosening of thought about such things ; not simply among the so-called immoral people, but among the population as a whole. Young men and women, yes, young men and women belonging to our good families, talk loosely and lightly about things concerning which our mothers and our grandmothers would hold up their hands in horror. To put it in another way, *standards* of morality have changed, and as a consequence, things which were once condemned are now tolerated, even if they are not approved of. Motherhood is by a large section of our young people no longer held as sacred, while chastity, even in families which used to be regarded as religious, is laughed at. I don't pretend to be a religious man ; but I speak as a doctor, and I know what I am talking about. There is a general loosening of thought, a general lowering of moral standards which may not be patent to the casual observer, but which are terribly real to anyone who has carefully studied the life of the town. The change is seen in every direction. You can't put your finger on this, and that, and the other thing, and say these are altered for the worse ; it is in the general trend of things, and that trend is not upward."

"Will you particularize a little ?" requested David, after a long silence.

"As I said, it is difficult to particularize," replied the doctor ; "and even if it were not, perhaps I am not the man to do it. I am a doctor, and it is my business to look after the people's physical health, to care for their bodies ; therefore, I am naturally somewhat of a materialist. All the same, I can't help seeing and hearing. Particularize——" and the doctor became pensive. "Well, for one thing family life has changed ; in fact, family life as it was known half a century ago is passing away. Parental authority too, is nearly gone. Young people talk loosely about living their own lives, and

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expressing their individualities in their own way. Then I don't think that ethical codes and moral standards count as they used to. Young people talk flippantly, and often derisively, about such things. You see, the Bible is regarded differently from what it used to be, and while it is not in my domain to appraise or condemn Biblical criticism, it has caused the new generation to pay less and less heed to the ethics of Jesus Christ. Then there is another thing. The war has revolutionized everything. It has smashed into smithereens things which used to be regarded as fixed and unalterable."

"And what does all this augur for the future?" asked David. "The children of thirty or forty years ago are the fathers and mothers of to-day, while the children who are now growing up will, in their turn, be the shaping and moulding factors of their age. Is the present generation likely to produce a better and nobler race than was given to the world by the men and women of two or three generations ago?"

"I'm afraid not," replied the doctor. "We may say what we will about the stern old Spartans in the times of our great grandfathers and great grandmothers, but they gave to the world a strong race of men and women who have made England what it is; while as far as I can judge, taking the boys and girls of to-day as I see them, the race that will follow will be weak and poor compared with their grandfathers and grandmothers."

David was silent for a time; he was evidently weighing the other's words. "You were saying just now that drunkenness was less prevalent to-day than it was; surely that is to the good?"

"Yes, I think it is; but here again I see a change. Forty years ago, when I came to this town, the temperance feeling was strong, while now, although open drunkenness is not so common, the amount of whisky and spirits consumed by what may be called the middle class young men makes one serious.

Then again think of the cocktail habit which is growing more and more prevalent among the middle classes ; the class of girls who never dreamed of drinking spirits when I came to Gildershaw forty years ago, now regard cocktails as commonplace."

"Heavens," cried David. "You do paint a black picture, doctor."

"Do I ?" replied the older man. "Well, you asked me to tell you what I thought, and I have tried to do so. Mind you, there is a great deal that is good and kind and generous among our people, but I am afraid that the trend is not upwards. Indeed, as I see it, we as a community are becoming less and less Christian every day."

"And what is the cure for it ?" asked David.

"My dear fellow, that is in your domain, not mine. It is my business to look after people's bodies, not their morals ; surely you are the man to answer that question."

"Can it be answered ?" asked David.

"If it can't," replied the doctor, "you and all the other parsons are only beating the air."

"It seems as though the Churches can do nothing," said David helplessly.

"At present they simply don't count," was the doctor's rejoinder. "The great bulk of the people pass them by as though they don't exist."

The doctor had barely finished speaking when there was a rushing of footsteps in the corridor outside the door, and Mary, the housemaid, entered.

"Have you heard the news ?" she cried excitedly.

"News ! What news ?"

"An accident !—an awful accident at the colliery !"

"What colliery ? Whose colliery ?"

"Wentworth colliery !—Miss Rashleigh's colliery !—The postman has just been here, and he says as 'ow there are hundreds killed !"

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“Which postman? What postman?” asked David excitedly, scarcely knowing what he was saying.

“Isaac Barraclough,” panted the girl. “He thought the rector would like to know,” she cried hysterically. “There has been a gas explosion, and nearly all the afternoon shift men have been killed.”

“Where is Isaac Barraclough?” asked the doctor.

“He’s at t’ back door,” cried the girl. “He thought t’ rector would want to ask him about it.”

David immediately led the way through the kitchen to the door where Isaac Barraclough awaited him, the doctor following closely at his heels.

“I must go to the pit at once,” Doctor Bentham said, three minutes later, “I may be wanted.”

“And I will go with you,” exclaimed the rector.

CHAPTER XIII

THE COLLIERY EXPLOSION

A MINUTE later the two men were seated in the doctor's car, driving rapidly through the town towards the Wentworth Colliery.

The fact that the news of the explosion had become public property was by this time manifest. Groups of men and women were standing at cottage doors talking excitedly, while others were wending their way towards the pit where it had taken place.

"Eh, doctor, 'ast 'a eerd t' news?" a man shouted as the car was wellnigh arrested by a large group of people who were gathered in the street. The doctor stopped the car.

"Tell us about it," he commanded.

"Ay, we knaw nowt for sartain, but there's no doubt about it. T'news came 'alf an hour sin'. A big explosion, doctor. Theer wur gas in t' pit, and it seems as 'ow a felly 'ad got a faulty lamp; onyhow, the gas got afire, and theer wur a terrible explosion."

This statement, short as it was, was interrupted at least a dozen times by others who wanted to give their version of the story. Everything seemed confused and uncertain except the fact itself. A horrible accident had taken place in the coal mine, and a number of men were killed.

"It is the old story," said the doctor to David, as the car dashed out of the town, "and it will be repeated as long as our antiquated methods in coal mines obtain. Scarcely a week passes but what accidents are happening in them all over the country. No doubt your great Cornishman, Sir Humphrey

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Davy, did a grand thing when he invented the safety lamp, but that ought to be improved on. It is nearly a hundred years ago since he gave his invention to the world, and at that time electricity was unknown. If someone were to invent an electric lamp on a similar principle, a lot of these accidents might be avoided ; however, it is no use talking about that now."

A few minutes later both men arrived at the pit.

I will not attempt to describe the scene at Tamsin Rashleigh's colliery on that May evening ; neither will I try to analyse the stories that were told concerning the causes of the calamity. Enough to say that, while the loss of life was not so great as it was at first feared, a ghastly accident had taken place, and horror succeeded horror until the last victim was accounted for. Naturally, the doctor was in great demand. It was not the first colliery accident which he had attended, and as victim after victim was brought to the surface, terror-stricken men and pale-faced women awaited his verdict with breathless interest. Little children were there, too, and perhaps they formed the most pathetic part of the terrible spectacle.

Even then, David felt a sort of helplessness and a sense of his unimportance. Only a few turned to him for solace and advice. It was not his skill or knowledge that people wanted, it was that of the doctor that they craved for. The young rector went from group to group doing what he could, and saying words of comfort where he could, but the people seemed to regard him stonily.

"I tell yo' it is that lass's fault," he heard one man say.

"What lass ?"

"Why, that Rashleigh lass. She might have done more for the colliery than she has."

"What more could she have done ?" asked another bystander.

"That is for her manager to say. I tell thee, I've 'eerd for

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months as 'ow this pit wur noan safe. If she had cared for the men that mak' her brass, she would have seen to it that everything wur safe."

"Nay, man, I doan't see that. What could she do? I have 'eerd agean and agean that she is a kind employer."

"Onyhow, she will have to pay a lot of compensation, and if she is niggardly about it I would be the first to burn down t' 'owd 'All. I expect she is off to London or somewhere, spendin' t' brass what she makes here."

At that moment a large car drew up near the colliery, and Tamsin stepped from it. Going straight to a group of men, and placing her hand upon the arm of one of them, she spoke earnestly.

"Is there anything I can do?" David heard her say. "I came the moment I heard of it. You may command anything that is in my power to give."

"Nothing can be done but what is being done, Miss Rashleigh." It was the colliery manager who replied.

"Is there anyone to blame?" she asked anxiously.

"No one is to blame," was the reply. "As far as we can discover it was simply an accident, common to all collieries. There was a serious escape of gas, and by some means or other which we don't know of, it caught afire."

The girl's face was pale as death, while her eyes shone with an unnatural light.

"And there is nothing I can do?"

"Nothing, Miss Rashleigh—except," and here the man spoke hesitatingly, "you might say a word of comfort to the women and children, many of whom are now widows and orphans."

"But what can I say?" cried the girl piteously. "It seems a mockery to try and speak words of comfort when there is no real comfort to give them. Oh, it's terrible! terrible!"

"You can comfort yourself with this, Miss Rashleigh,

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anyhow," said the manager. "It is the first accident which has happened in your pit since it has been opened."

"Yes, I know," cried the girl, "but that brings no help to the women who have lost their husbands or sons, or to the children who have been left fatherless."

Darkness was now descending, and the people who still remained near the colliery, looked more and more ghostly as they wandered around in the dim evening light. Many of the miners, even those who had received injuries during the accident, worked like heroes to try and rescue their fellows from the awful depths below.

Not a man seemed desirous of sparing himself. The merest hint that help might be effectual at this place or that was followed by numberless volunteers to undertake dangerous and arduous work. Whatever might have been the cause of the accident, scarcely a man refrained from offering to do all that lay in his power to help.

At first Tamsin Rashleigh seemed to be able to do nothing effectual. More than once she saw lowering looks directed towards herself, and heard many angry words about the rich murdering the poor. This made her sensitive, and perhaps kept her from doing what she would otherwise have done, but presently her presence became appreciated, and more than one mourner seemed to be helped by what she said to them. The very fact that the great lady of the district, whose people had lived in the old Hall for many generations, so far cared for them in their trouble as to be with them in such a dread hour, broke down barriers and softened hard feelings.

"She is a kind lass, after all," David heard one woman say to another.

"Ay, she's noan so bad."

"After all, she couldn't help it," added another.

"Ay, but Tom Bingley ses as 'ow if she'd provided better lamps the gas mightn't have exploded."

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"Tom Bingley is a fool," remarked another. "Onyhow, it was very kind of 'er to coom 'ere like this."

Although Tamsin Rashleigh had noticed that David was at the colliery, and that he had rendered what aid he was able, she had not spoken to him. But when darkness fell, and she realized that she could do no further good, she made her way towards him.

"Mr. Godolphin," she said, "how are you getting back to the rectory?"

"I shall walk, Miss Rashleigh," replied David coldly.

He had of course noted her presence, and had been a little hurt that for nearly two hours she had failed to speak to him.

"I suppose it is because of what I said to her the last time I went to the Hall," he reflected. Thus, in spite of the fact that his heart was yearning for a word from her, his pride kept him from speaking.

"My car is here, Mr. Godolphin, and I can easily drop you at the rectory."

"Please don't trouble," was his reply. "I can get back all right." For a few seconds she was silent. Perhaps she was also a little hurt at the curtness with which he spoke.

"I want a chat with you," she said presently. "Can you spare me half an hour?"

"If I can be of any service, Miss Rashleigh."

"Come, then," she said, leading the way to the car. "You don't mind going up to the Hall, do you? I think I would rather speak to you there than at the rectory." Without a word, David took his seat by her side, and a few minutes later entered the great house.

"Have you had any dinner, Mr. Godolphin?"

"Dinner?" repeated David. "By jove, I had forgotten all about it."

"Then you must be starving. I was in the middle of mine when the news came; after that I couldn't eat another mouthful. I will ring for something."

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“No,” replied David. “I couldn’t eat.”

“But you must. People will want you, and you mustn’t be ill.” She rung a bell as she spoke, and gave orders to a servant.

“What did you want to say to me?” he asked, presently. He had noticed that her face was as pale as death, while her features were drawn as if by pain.

“I saw you talking to the people!” she replied. “What did you say to them?”

“I’m afraid I couldn’t say much. Words seemed poor at such a time.”

“And yet you are the rector of the parish!”

“What do you mean by that, Miss Rashleigh?” he asked, for he felt that there was something like a taunt in her voice. She did not reply for some time, and David noticed that her eyes expressed a great unsatisfied yearning which almost amounted to terror.

“It is the first time I was ever present at such a scene,” she said presently. “Think of it! It is *my* colliery! I own it! I have been receiving a fairly big income from it. Coal was discovered there in my father’s days, and he found capital for working the seam; presently other seams were found, until by and by it became quite a big thing.—And now this!”

She paused for a time, and David saw that her lips were quivering.

“Fancy,” she went on; “many of the men who are dead, all of them, in fact, were alive and well this morning. One woman, Mrs. Bagshaw, she was called, told me what her husband and two sons said to her when they left the cottage at midday—And now they are dead, dead! When to-morrow comes, and the sun rises, they will not be alive to see it; they are dead. Do you realize it, Mr. Godolphin? They are *dead*; they will never see the sunshine again, never see the flowers, never hear the birds sing; they are *dead*! It is ghastly, positively ghastly!”

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She sobbed almost convulsively as she spoke, while her whole body shook. Doubtless her experience that evening had frightened her, had told terribly upon her nerves. David was dumb in her presence. The grim tragedy of the day had affected him just as much as it had affected her ; and she, by the tensivity of her words, had made him feel more than ever his own helplessness.

“ I saw you talking with that woman whose husband and sons were killed,” she went on. “ What did you say to her ? ”

“ Very little, I am afraid,” was his reply ; then he added slowly, “ What could I say ? ”

“ And yet you are rector of the parish,” she repeated. Again he felt a taunt in her words, and anxious to justify himself, burst out eagerly : “ Of course, I tried to comfort her ; tried to tell her that she would meet her husband and her sons again.”

“ And did you make her believe it ? ”

“ I am afraid I didn't,” he replied. He called to mind the hopeless misery he had seen in the woman's eyes, he also remembered the awful cry she gave when her loved ones were brought up from the depths of the coal mine.

“ Mr. Godolphin,” cried the girl, and there was anger in her tones. “ Do you really believe that that woman will meet her husband and her sons again ? Just think, you are the rector of the parish ; can you honestly tell me that you are sure of a future life ? *Sure*, mind you ; not only for those who have been killed to-day, but for all those who are buried in the old churchyard ? ”

Her eyes were fixed fiercely upon him as she spoke, and she seemed to be trying to read his inmost soul.

He tried to answer in the affirmative, but could not. He could not utter platitudes at such a time. He felt as though the girl's fierce gaze was scorching him. “ I hope so,” he managed to say presently.

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"*Hope so!*" she cried with withering scorn. "*Hope so!* Is that all you have to say?"

"I hope so," he repeated.

"But hope isn't certainty, Mr. Godolphin," replied the girl like one in anger. "Saying 'hope so' won't lift the burden from those poor people's hearts or bring joy into their lives."

"The line between hope and belief is very thin," he replied, like one wanting to justify himself.

"But it isn't the same thing," she answered quickly. "Belief, rightly understood, is *conviction*. Are you *convinced*? Could you go to that poor woman to-night and say to her: 'Mrs. Bagshaw, your parting from your husband and sons will not be for long. *I am sure* that you will meet them again in a better world where there is no sorrow, and no parting; no pain, no death?' Could you, Mr. Godolphin?"

David was silent.

"I can't even say '*I hope so,*'" went on the girl, in whose voice a dull misery was expressed. "Do you remember the day when you first came here—you and Nick Trebartha and Naomi? I told you then that I was a heathen, that I had no belief in anything. That I had a greater sympathy with the old Greeks whose motto was 'Let us eat, drink and be merry for to-morrow we die,' than I had with Paul, who wanted to convert them to his faith? But I never felt the utter hopelessness, the utter emptiness, the miserable hollowness of our modern life as I felt it to-day. Why think!" and tears ran down her face as she spoke, "there are hundreds of houses in Gildershaw this night with the shadow of death resting on them. The men, who this morning went away from those houses with a joke and a laugh on their lips, will never come back again; never, *never, never!* And yet I had no message to give them—Yes, I had though; I will see to it that not one of those widows or orphans shall want. But that isn't enough. I want to be able to tell them, not haltingly, but certainly,

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triumphantly, victoriously, that I am sure their darkness will end in light. Can you help me, Mr. Godolphin ? ”

Again David was dumb in her presence. He felt that there was much he could say to her, but the words would not come. “ I have boasted about being a sceptic,” went on the girl bitterly. “ I have laughed at those who pretended to believe in Christianity, and have said that as long as I had good novels to read, theatres to go to, dances to enjoy, and all that sort of thing, that I had no need of anything like religion. But in face of what I have seen and heard to-day, my so-called scepticism is a miserable, tawdry mockery.—Oh, I know what you are thinking about. You are remembering that afternoon when I told you that the rector’s work in Gildershaw was to originate theatrical societies, dancing clubs, literary evenings and all that sort of thing ; but when I think of that poor woman’s face as she told me that she could never hope to hear the voice of her husband and sons again——” She seemed unable to speak another word, and sat back in her chair with a look of utter hopelessness in her eyes.

Tamsin Rashleigh had indeed revealed a new phase of her character to David that night. Hitherto, she had generally been proud and self-contained ; often she was flippant and superficial, and whenever she had for a moment struck a deeper note, she had quickly laughed at it as though she were ashamed of herself for being serious. Now, however, it was a new Tamsin Rashleigh that he saw. This girl had not only infinite compassion for the poor, the needy, and the suffering, but she had great longings for the higher things of life, as well as infinite capabilities.

“ Do you know what I thought about this evening, Mr. Godolphin ? ” she went on presently. “ I thought of Jesus meeting Martha in Bethany after her brother had died. It came to me like a flash as I was talking with some of the people. You remember it, of course ? Martha came to Jesus with tears and woe because her brother was dead. ‘ Thy

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brother shall rise again,' Jesus said, and Martha, having a vague faith in some of the doctrines she had heard expounded, said: 'I know that he shall rise at the resurrection, at the last day.' *The last day!*—just think of it! How far away, how miserable it was! Then Jesus burst forth with that saying which has come down through the ages: 'I *am* the resurrection and the life, he that believeth on Me, though he were dead yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on Me shall never die.' "

David could not help looking at the girl as she spoke, could not help being moved by the light in her eyes.

"Oh, wasn't Jesus grand!" cried Tamsin. "If I could only believe that!"

"You see, Jesus was sure of God," David volunteered.

The girl leapt to her feet as though she were startled.

"Sure of God!—*sure of God!*" she repeated. "Why that is *everything*, Mr. Godolphin! If only I were sure of God I should never have another fear, never have another sad moment. *Sure of God!* why, that's the secret of the world's joy!—But you are not sure of God, Mr. Godolphin."

She held out her hand as she spoke. "Good-night," she said. "I don't think I want to talk any more now; and I am sure you are tired."

David shook her hand perfunctorily as though nothing out of the ordinary had happened, and walked to the door as if accepting her dismissal. No sooner was the door handle in his hand, however, than he turned to her. "Miss Rashleigh," he said, "I want to thank you for asking me here to-night. I am sorry I haven't been able to help you; sorry I haven't been able to say anything positive to you. And yet I don't want you to think there is nothing positive in my faith. There is. A great deal—more than you think. I am afraid that you regret having asked me to come to Gildershaw as rector, but I can honestly say this: I was never so much worthy of being rector of Gildershaw as I am now. You asked

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me just now if I were sure that there is a future life for those people who were killed to-day, and I couldn't say yes. You have said also that I am not sure of God ; perhaps I am not. But I am going to be ; *yes, I am going to be !* If not I shall not remain rector of Gildershaw."

Tamsin, whose eyes had been cast down while he had been speaking, now raised them, as if in inquiry.

"Yes, I mean it," he went on. "I am going to be sure of it. For I *can* be. Yes, I *can* be sure ; and when I am sure it will alter everything ; for it is the greatest fact in life !"

"How can you be sure ?" she asked.

"I don't know, yet. Something seems hiding the truth from me, but the veil which hides it is thinner to-night than ever before. You quoted some words of Jesus just now, and said they were great. They *are* great ; they are *infinite* in their greatness. And He said something else too. He said, 'Seek and ye shall find, knock and the door shall be opened unto you.' Well, I am going to seek until I find. And I *shall* find, Miss Rashleigh. I am not going to rest until I *do* find. Good night." Then he left the room without another word.

David remembered nothing of his journey from the Hall to the rectory that night. The pale crescent of a dying moon was shining through the spring leaves, birds were twittering as they settled down to rest ; the promise of full summer glory was everywhere around him, but he knew nothing of it. He could not have told whether he opened the rectory door with his own latchkey or whether he rang a bell for a servant to open it. His mind was too busy, his thoughts were far away. Intellectually and spiritually he was being born again, and yet nothing was plain to him. Nay, rather it seemed to him as though that summer night were black, and the sky covered with impenetrable clouds. Yet in the East there were signs of the dawn of a new day.

David scarcely slept that night. Again and again he lived

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over the events through which he had passed during the day. First of all there were his experiences at the Tennis Club. They did not seem of much importance, yet they counted tremendously. He called to mind what Dick Grimshaw had said remembered the sneering way in which he had spoken of clergymen. Dick had doubtless intended to belittle him, and to make him feel that he counted for nothing in the life of the town. He had also wanted to belittle him in the eyes of those who were gathered around to watch the tennis match. He had felt sure that he could, as he termed it, "wipe the floor" with David; and the young rector could not help noticing the look of a devil in his eyes when he had to confess himself beaten. Of course there was nothing in a game of tennis, and yet he was convinced that from that time forward Dick would be his enemy.

Then followed the conversation he had overheard in the pavilion. He knew that manners and morals had undergone a great change during the last few years; nevertheless, he was utterly shocked at the way these well-dressed girls seemed to regard moral standards. They had seemed to look upon loose living among young men as the order of the day; and they had declared in as many words that they meant to be as free to follow their own inclinations as men were. Of course, it might be pure boastfulness on their part, and possibly had no real significance, nevertheless——

He remembered his conversation with Hopwood, and his talk with the doctor. It was all terribly confusing and bewildering. Hopwood seemed to have no more real conviction than himself; he was not certain of anything. His great trouble seemed to be about Orders, as though that kind of thing got down to the root of the matter. David's real trouble was that worldliness, materialism, paganism had gripped the town, and he was powerless to bring it back to faith. According to the doctor, Gildershaw was less religious now than it was fifty years ago. What was the meaning of it? Was his

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profession a sham, or had he failed to get hold of the eternal things for which the founder of Christianity had lived and died ?

But all this was swallowed up in the terrible events which followed. Again he lived through the scenes at the colliery ; watched while man after man was brought to the surface ; saw the looks of hopeless agony on the faces of the women who mourned their dead. How he longed to comfort them ! He had prayed for a message whereby he could lift the black pall of despair from the lives of those who stood hopelessly around.

And that talk with Tamsin Rashleigh afterwards ! How her eyes seemed to scorch him ; how vain had been the platitudes he had tried to utter ! And yet there had been much to comfort him. It was true he had been almost dumb in her presence, and yet never had he been so sure that there *was* truth at the back of the things he taught as he was sure then. But there was something which hindered him from getting at the vital inwardness of it all ; something which kept his profession from being a real living thing.

For the next few days he felt almost like a man in a dream. It was his business, as rector of the parish, to go into houses of mourning and bring comfort ; but here was his difficulty. He had a great message to deliver, great words of hope to speak ; but because they were only partly real to him he could not make them real to the mourners.

One of the houses which he had to visit was that of Mrs. Bagshaw, who had lost her husband and two sons in the accident.

"Ay, Mester Godolphin," the woman said, "but my husband and my two lads are dead, and I shall ne'er see them agean."

"Don't lose hope, Mrs. Bagshaw," David said.

"What 'ave I to 'ope for ?" asked the woman.

"To see them again in a better world," replied David.

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"'Ow do I knaw there *is* a better world?" asked the woman.

"The teaching of the Church throughout all the ages——" David began.

"I knaw nowt about the Church," replied the woman; "all I knaw is that my man and my two lads are dead."

"Don't you believe in God, Mrs. Bagshaw?"

"Ay, I did when I wur a lass," replied the woman, "but I seem to believe nowt now. Look 'ere, Mester, are yo' sure that my man Dick, and my two lads, Joe and Harry, are not dead? Are yo' sure that they have gone to a better world? Are yo' sure there *is* a better world?"

She spoke to him with that grim incisiveness common to Yorkshire people when they are deeply moved; and David, because he was honest to the core, and would not tell her of things of which he was not utterly convinced, could only answer her in vague generalities.

That conversation was typical of many others in which he took part during the days which followed the colliery explosion. The black pall of night hung over the town, and he seemed to be able to do nothing to lift it. Despair, and not joyful confidence was what he witnessed day by day.

Then, to make matters worse, a section of the town appeared to be given over to revelry. Public-houses did a roaring trade, and many tried to drown their misery in drink.

"When a man gets a sup of whisky in him he forgets his trouble," said one man to him; "and 't ony rate, we've noan got prohibition like they have among the Yanks, so we may as well drink and forget our troubles."

Indeed, some said, although I will not vouch for the truth of it, that there had not been so much drunkenness in Gildershaw for many years as was seen in the days following that awful tragedy.

But that was not all. The sorrow and grief, hard as it was to witness, was better than the callous indifference which

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was sometimes manifested. Tamsin Rashleigh, true to her promise, had been more than generous to many of those who had suffered loss ; and to hear both men and women discuss the amounts they had received from the owner of the colliery, revealed to David a sordidness of mind which was hard to bear.

Not that there were no rays of light in the darkness ; there were. Here and there were some who did not sorrow as those without hope. Some, indeed, were joyful in their confidence that they would meet their loved ones again.

“ Ay, Mester,” said one old woman to him, the tears streaming down her face meanwhile ; “ a better man nor my Amos never lived. He wur converted up at the Primitive Methodist Chapel more nor forty year ago, and ’ee’s kept his religion ever sin’. ’Tis hard to lose him, but ’ee’s gone to a better world ; and I shall meet him agean.”

“ You feel sure of this, Mrs. Dodson ? ” asked the young rector.

“ If I wurn’t sure, I should go mad,” replied the woman. “ Do yo’ knaw, Mester, that when I read the eleventh chapter of John laast neet I fair shouted wi’ joy. ‘ Thy brother shall rise again,’ the Lord said to Martha ; and, Mester Godolphin, that’s what the Lord said to me. ‘ Thy husband shall rise again, and thou shalt see him face to face ! ’ That’s oal t’ comfort I’ve got now, and I jest live for the day when I shall see t’ owd man agean.”

“ That’s religion, that’s faith, victorious faith ! ” thought the young rector as he walked away from Mrs. Dodson’s cottage. “ If all the town believed as she believed, what a difference it would make ! But it doesn’t. It is only here and there that one has got hold of anything like certainty. That is what I must make the people feel.”

CHAPTER XIV

“AM I SURE ?”

NEVER did David feel the incongruity of Institutional Christianity as he felt it during the funerals at which he officiated. The old churchyard had been practically disused for some years, and nearly all the interments took place in the cemetery, which was situated at some little distance out of the town. Here the mourners were divided into three sections. One part of the cemetery was what was termed “consecrated ;” this was used for those who had been associated with the Established Church of England. Then there was a portion which was termed “unconsecrated,” and it was here that those who had belonged in a more or less degree to the various Chapels in the town were interred. Besides this, were the Roman Catholic burials at which Father Benny, the priest, officiated. If it had not been so sad it would have been amusing. While David was reading the burial service at one part of the cemetery, the voice of one of the Nonconformist ministers could be heard reading practically the same service in another part ; while a little distance away the Roman Catholic priest was performing the rites of the Roman Church.

“How can people believe in Christianity ?” thought the young rector. “The people are divided even in death, and the part of the Church to which I belong seems to accentuate the divisions. What would Christ say if He came here to-day and saw all this ? Why couldn’t there be one great united service for all the people ? We believe in the same God, or at least

we pretend to ; we are also supposed to believe in the same Christ, and yet even here we are divided.”

When Sunday came David was much excited. He knew that it was the custom, on the Sunday following a funeral for the friends of the departed to gather in the churches to which they ostensibly belonged ; and it came to him like a call from God to say something that day which would mark an epoch in the town, so he busied himself during his spare hours before the Sunday in preparing a message.

When he entered the church, he saw that it was nearly full. Pew after pew which was ordinarily empty was peopled by men and women who, perhaps, had not been to Church for years. Looking over the broad expanse of the building, moreover, he saw that what was called the “Hall Pew” was also full, and, what excited him almost beyond words, Tamsin Rashleigh was present.

When he took his place in the choir, he prayed as he had never prayed before for guidance and power ; and yet it seemed to him as though he was breathing out his prayer to nothingness. In spite of his desires, the gathering of the people suggested a respectable custom rather than a wondrous reality ; something that was the proper thing to do, rather than to participate in the worship of Almighty God ; and to ponder over the great message which Christ came to give to the world.

Still, he read the opening sentences of the service with feeling, and, as he proceeded, the reality of everything became more manifest.

Presently he mounted the pulpit, and looked over the sea of faces.

“In the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,” he repeated, and then he became silent.

As I have said, he had prepared his address carefully, and yet, as he saw the men and women who had gathered, he felt he could not deliver it ; it was too artificial, it was all too far

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away to express the feelings which had surged up in his heart. In fact, it seemed to him almost like a mockery.

The silence continued for some seconds, meanwhile he stood in the pulpit looking out over the congregation. The thing he had written seemed poorer and poorer as the seconds passed by, and yet as it appeared to him he had nothing better to say.

But he had. A hundred thoughts were seething in his mind, but he scarcely knew the meaning of what was demanding utterance. Here were seven or eight hundred people, many of whom were made solemn by the experiences through which they had passed ; and all of them were in a way influenced by their surroundings, and waiting for his message.

Then he caught sight of Tamsin Rashleigh's face, on which was a look he had never seen before. She, like others, was gazing towards him attentively, and he thought he saw in her eyes a look of unutterable longing, as if she were hoping with a great hope that he would kindle the lamp of faith.

"My friends," he said, presently. "I had prepared an address to give you this morning, but I shall not give it ; it is not what I want to say. We have all been staggered and bewildered by what has taken place, and we have gathered here in this old parish church, some of us perhaps without knowing why, except that it is the custom so to do after funerals. Is God here ? Is there a God at all ? Are the men and boys who were killed last Tuesday alive ? Are they here this morning ? Are they watching our faces, reading our thoughts ; or do they lie in the cold and silent grave, and is everything to them an everlasting nothingness ? Let me read to you some words of Him who spake as never man spake."

Almost like a man in a dream he turned to the eleventh chapter of St. John's gospel, and read the verses which described the meeting between Jesus and Martha, and how the Lord raised Lazarus from the dead. When he had finished, he again stood before his congregation in silence.

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“ Do you believe in this ? ” he asked presently. “ Not in a conventional way or because it is in the Bible, but really believe it ? Because if you do, it will change everything. These are among the greatest words ever spoken. Listen, ‘ I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth on Me though he were dead yet shall he live ; and whosoever liveth and believeth on Me shall never die.’ Do you believe that ? Do I believe it ? Am I *sure* of these things ?

“ This is, or ought to be, a tremendous moment in our lives. Last Tuesday over a hundred men and boys belonging to our town were killed. On Tuesday morning they were alive. They could see the blue sky ; they could hear the birds sing ; they could feel the pulsation of life. In the evening they were dead. Are they dead for ever ? Since then it has been our sad duty to bury their bodies. I and the other ministers of the town have read the time-honoured burial service at their gravesides, and this morning the friends of those who were associated with the Church of England have come here, while the friends of those associated with other Churches have doubtless gone to them.

“ As I said, it is a tremendous moment in our lives. You and I have been brought face to face with death in a terrible way. But what is death ? Is it an everlasting nothingness, or is it the beginning of another life ? Have we bidden our loved ones good-bye for ever, or shall we see them again ? When we die, do we die like flies, or is there a home prepared for us to which our spirits shall go when they depart from the body ? ”

David ceased speaking here, and looked around on the congregation like a man bewildered.

“ This town of Gildershaw has a great deal of good in it ; ” he went on presently, “ a great deal that is kind and generous and loving ; but unless I am terribly mistaken it is drifting to the devil. Drunkenness, vice, gambling, and sensuality have laid their deathly grip upon a great number of the people.

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I have an idea, too, that God is wanting to use the terrible time through which we have been passing to open our eyes to the truth, to make us know that when He gave us the breath of life, He did not mean us to be the miserable things many of us are. Lots of you men have been living like mere beasts of the field. Did God intend you so to degrade your manhood? Some of you women are at this time living with men who are not your husbands. Are you justified before God in doing that? Many of you are living as though there were no God and as though Christ had never died. Perhaps you don't believe in God or in Christ?"

Again he stopped and looked around the Church. A deathly silence prevailed, and people watched him wonderingly, as if asking themselves what would come next.

"As I said," he went on, "I had prepared an address to give you this morning, but I can't give it; it is not what I want to say. I, David Godolphin, am rector of this parish, and I have been wondering how far I have been faithful to my calling since I have been with you. Many of you seldom go to Church, perhaps this is the first time some of you have entered these doors for years. This is not a church-going town, nor do we live in a church-going age. Whose fault is it? Is it mine or is it yours? What is the reason you have never been to the house of God? Is it because you are utterly irreligious, and utterly careless about spiritual things, or is it because I have uttered only empty platitudes? Have I really believed in this tremendous thing I am here to proclaim, or is it only a respectable convention with me? Something is wrong, terribly wrong. Is the wrong in me, or is it in you? I want to be honest."

Again he ceased, and seemed on the point of repeating the time-honoured closing formula, but again he continued:

"I have no more to say now," he concluded; "but I hope everyone of you will come next Sunday. I will tell you why. I think I shall have something to say which will be worth your

hearing ; because, God helping me, I mean to tear the heart meaning out of this calling of mine. I am going to tell you nothing but what I am really sure of ; but I have a feeling that God is going to speak to me during this coming week. Up to now I have been sure of nothing ; but I mean to be sure. Let us all kneel in silent prayer.”

A few minutes later the Church was empty, while the people talked in excited groups outside.

“What’s matter wi’ yon chap ?” asked some.

“He mun be a bit gone i’ t’ upper story,” others said.

“Nay, but I never ’eerd onything so interesting in my life. Thet young chap fairly made me shiver.”

“Art ’a coming next Sunday ?”

“Ay, I am, I wouldn’t miss it for onything. The young felly means something.”

“Weel, he didn’t talk like a church parson, but there is truth in what he said.”

“Ay, he did an’ a’ ; there might be no God, no Heaven, no Hell, as far as Gildershaw is concerned,” said others.

Before the day was over the service as a whole, and David’s address in particular, had been discussed as no other address had been discussed for many a long year. Everything was so unconventional, so utterly out of accord with the usual form of Church services, that many were shocked. Indeed, two sets of opinions were freely advocated. One was that the whole service throbbed with reality, and meant more to the lives of the people than anything which had been known in the Church within the memory of man. Others had it that David was nothing better than an atheist, and had no business to be rector of the parish. Among those who expressed the latter opinion most loudly was Dick Grimshaw.

“I went to Church this morning out of respect for those who were killed,” he proclaimed emphatically, “and I expected a decent, well conducted, orderly service ; I naturally thought, too, that sympathy would be expressed with the mourners.

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I don't profess to be a religious man, and I don't say that I am better than other people ; but that kind of thing is a disgrace, and the chap ought never to be allowed to go in the pulpit again. If nobody else speaks to the bishop, I shall."

"I seldom go to Church," replied Tom Dowdswell, to whom he said this, "and when I do I invariably go to sleep ; but by jove, he kept us awake to-day. Are you going to hear him next Sunday, Dick ?"

"Not I," replied Dick. "The fellow is a disgrace to his profession."

"I don't know so much about that. Chaps like you and me are no better than we ought to be, you know, Dick."

"What have parsons got to do with that ? That talk this morning will set the people by the ears, and make them ask all sorts of questions. Why, the Church will be no better than a dissenting chapel if that kind of thing is allowed to go on. Religion should be a respectable, orderly thing, and parsons should mind their own job. That fellow is nothing better than a ranter."

"He is Miss Rashleigh's choice, anyhow. I heard that the bishop tried to persuade her not to appoint him, but she had her way. I saw she was in church this morning, too. She didn't speak to you, Dick." At this, Grimshaw was silent, but Tom Dowdswell, in describing their conversation afterwards, said that he had an ugly look in his eyes.

David did not attempt to preach a sermon that evening, and beyond the announcement that on the following Sunday night he would endeavour to fulfil the promise he made in the morning, the service caused no comment.

The following morning, however, the young rector was seen to leave the rectory and make his way to the Gildershaw railway station. There he took a ticket for the cathedral town of the diocese, and when the train arrived he made his way to the bishop's palace.

"Hullo, Godolphin, you must have left Gildershaw early

this morning to get here so soon,” the bishop greeted him.

“Yes, I wanted to be early, otherwise I might have missed you,” replied David. “I hope my visit won’t inconvenience you.”

“I can give you just an hour,” replied the bishop, “and let me say before we go any further how deeply I sympathize with you all at Gildershaw. You have had a terrible time there.”

“Yes, it is about that I’ve come,” replied David.

“Yes, what can I do for you?”

“I hope you can do a great deal. At any rate, I felt it my duty to consult you.”

“What is the matter?”

“Everything is the matter. The truth of it is, Bishop, Gildershaw seems to be without religion; and I, personally, seem to have no power to bring the people back to the realities of faith.”

The bishop looked at David critically. As we have said, he was not at all pleased at the idea of the young man being appointed rector of Gildershaw. He would have liked a man more of his own way of thinking, and one who would have conducted the services in the old parish church more in accordance with his idea of the Catholic faith. He was one of those bishops who had strongly stood for the deposited Prayer Book, and was terribly chagrined when Parliament rejected it. He was in fact, although he did not say it in so many words, in favour of defying Parliament. Thus, having learnt something of David’s views, he would not have been at all displeased if he resigned his position as rector of such an important living as Gildershaw.

“You make a sweeping statement, Godolphin,” he said.

“Surely things are not so bad as you say?”

David thereupon gave him a description of what had taken place during the past week. He described how, on the previous Tuesday afternoon, he had for the first time during his residence

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at Gildershaw made his way to the Tennis Club, and told him what had taken place. He related the conversation he had overheard, and then went on to tell of what Hopwood had said to him. After this he told of his conversation with the doctor, which was presently interrupted by the news of the colliery accident.

His experiences were so recent and his feelings so strong that he perhaps emphasized those things which had appealed to him most poignantly. Be that as it may, he made the bishop feel uncomfortable.

"Of course," remarked his lordship, "I suppose the whole country is becoming more and more irreligious. At any rate, Church attendance is on the decrease, but surely, what you tell me doesn't represent the life of the people generally?"

"I am afraid it does," replied David, "and I feel that as far as our own Church is concerned we are only touching the fringe of things, even if we are doing that."

"But I hear that your congregation has increased," admitted the bishop presently.

"Increased!" repeated David almost angrily. "It may be that a score or two more attend now than in old White-cross's days, but that seems to me as nothing. The truth is that the Church as a whole, doesn't affect the life of the town at all. Churches don't seem to count, Bishop, and I personally feel that I am playing at the whole thing. I have not got down to the bed-rock."

"Still, as far as I can learn," the Bishop informed him, "you are maintaining the Church institutions."

"The Church institutions! what are they?" cried David. "Surely it is the duty of a minister of God to make the people realize God, to realize Jesus Christ, and I don't. Why, even yesterday——"

"Yes?" queried the bishop. "Of course, you would have a large congregation after such a happening. What took place?"

David took a packet from his pocket and handed it to the bishop. “That is the sermon I prepared to deliver yesterday morning,” he said. “Has your lordship time to glance through it ? ”

The bishop took the manuscript a little impatiently. He did not feel in the humour to read sermons that morning ; still, the occasion was special, and he tried to read it sympathetically.

“Yes,” he said when he had finished it, “that is not at all bad. I think you ought to have emphasized, on such an occasion, the necessity of the people coming to Church regularly ; and, especially in view of the terrible events which have happened, you should have urged the necessity of the Eucharist.”

He enlarged upon this, and spoke very emphatically. David listened very attentively, if a little impatiently, to his harangue.

“But I didn’t preach it,” he said, when the other had finished.

“Didn’t preach it ! Why ? It is not a bad sermon.”

“It was a *made* thing,” replied David impatiently, “a written thing, and it did not express what was in my heart at all. The congregation was largely made up of people who had not been inside the Church for years. I knew scores of them, knew their lives, knew their way of living ; and I tell you this, my lord, Christianity is to most of them only a respectable legend. They don’t believe in it, and I wanted to make them believe. I wanted to make them realize that Christ is the greatest fact in the world. That was why I didn’t deliver it.”

“What did you do, then ? ” asked the bishop.

David related to him as far as he could remember what he had done and said.

“And you told the people to come next Sunday night because you believe you would have something of importance to

say ? Have you any reason for believing that any special message will come to you ? ”

“ I don’t know that I have,” replied David, “ but the conviction came to me yesterday that something would come. That is why I said what I did ; and this morning it came to me that you might be able to help me. Can you, my lord ? ”

The bishop looked at the young man keenly, and realized that he was deadly in earnest. During the years he had been bishop of the diocese, many of his clergy had come to him for help and advice ; but in the main they were different from the man who now stood before him. Moreover, the help they needed was of a different nature ; generally they had been troubled about little things ; points of law and order, petty squabbles in their parishes, difficulties about vestments, and matters of that sort. But there was nothing of this in David’s request. He had come about a vital matter, something that lay at the heart of his work. He was different from the ordinary run of the clergy, too. Here was not a man who was weak and invertebrate, but who was strong and vigorous, and who would not be put off with commonplaces ; one who meant to get at the heart of truth.

“ Let us clear the ground a little,” the bishop said. “ You are a sound Churchman, aren’t you ? ”

“ It depends on what you mean by a sound Churchman,” replied David.

“ Well, then, to put it more plainly, you believe that the Church of England is the true Church ? You believe in the Church’s priesthood, and in her sacraments ? ”

“ Yes,” replied David thoughtfully, after a long pause, “ but isn’t it all a matter of definition ? I believe that the Church consists of all true believers in Jesus Christ of whatever name or denomination. I believe in the priesthood of all true believers ; and I want to be absolutely honest with you, Bishop, but I am not quite clear as to what you mean by the sacraments.”

Again the bishop paused. He saw that he and the young rector looked at Christianity from different view-points, and although he almost detested the way David stated things, he remembered that the Church of England was supposed to give a wide latitude; remembered, too, that many of the highly-placed clergy, even bishops, would accept what David had said. Nevertheless, strong sacerdotalist as he was, he could not allow his remarks to go unchallenged. He therefore set forth in vigorous language his own conception of the faith they were both supposed to hold.

“And that is what you would have me tell the people on Sunday night?” asked David.

“Why not?” evaded the other.

“Because, according to the way I look at things, it would have no effect. Here is my difficulty. The people don’t believe in Christ; they don’t believe in a spiritual world; they are drifting to heathenism, and in the main living only for their senses. This colliery explosion has frightened them, set them wondering, made them ask questions; I want to bring them back to reality.”

“Well, and isn’t the sacrament of the blessed Eucharist the very centre of our Christian faith? Isn’t Christ’s supreme sacrifice the very heart and centre of what you and I profess to teach? As a consequence, should it not be constantly proclaimed? Do you have early celebrations daily in your Church? Have you the Eucharist every Sunday morning?”

David sighed. He realized that his visit was useless, that there was such a wide difference between his conception of Christianity and that of the bishop, that further conversation would be useless. Still, he realized that the bishop was older than he, and in many things wiser. He believed also that he was eminently sincere and, above all, a man of God; therefore he still persisted in asking his questions.

“And do you think if I followed your advice that I should

rouse the people to earnestness about the great spiritual realities of life ? ” he asked.

“ In a very deep and vital sense,” replied the bishop, “ we have nothing to do with results ; results are in God’s hands. What we have to do is to obey the Church, which is the mouthpiece of God, and leave consequences with Him.”

“ Forgive me, my lord, but I *have* to do with consequences,” replied David earnestly. “ If you will forgive me for saying so, my work as a clergyman is to make men realize God and Jesus Christ, and what you have been talking about wouldn’t do this. Why, take the case of poor Hopwood ; he came almost broken-hearted to me last Tuesday evening. He has had everything in his Church which you have been advocating. He has had daily celebrations ; he has had what he calls Mass ; he has instituted confession ; he has taught all those things which you seem to regard as essential. And what has been the net result of it all ? The young and vigorous minds of the town repudiate his teaching ; for that matter he is the laughing-stock among those who read and think. Bishop,” and David spoke solemnly, “ I have not come to you lightly, neither have I come to you as one who has not tried to understand. Since I came to Gildershaw I have worked hard, I have read hard ; I have read the New Testament again and again. I have read hundreds of books written by men of all schools of thought, in my endeavour to get at the truth of things ; and this is what has come to me : All that you have said about ceremonials and vestments has nothing to do with Christianity at all. As far as I have read history, they are simply relics of paganism. Jesus never taught them, never even thought of them ; neither did the apostles. There is not a word in any of the gospels, or in the epistles, that can be interpreted by any reasonable exegesis, to be even distantly related to them. That is why, and I say it with all respect, I cannot teach what you would have me teach.”

“ And isn’t your stubbornness the cause of your failure ? ” asked the bishop. “ You confess that you have failed, and isn’t that the reason you have come to me ? ”

“ I am afraid I have failed,” replied the young man humbly, “ and I came to you this morning hoping that you would be able to throw some light upon my difficulties ; but the things you advocate, and I say it with all humility, seem to me to be playing at religion ; they get nowhere near the heart of the truth at all.”

“ Be careful, young man,” retorted the bishop, almost angrily. “ Remember to whom you are speaking.”

“ Forgive me if I have overstepped the bounds of courtesy,” replied David, “ I certainly did not mean to. I look upon you as my father in God, and I came to you sincerely and humbly for advice. I am passing through deep waters, and I am wanting to find some sure foothold ; but with all respect due to your position, your age, and your learning, I cannot accept your advice.”

Again the bishop looked at the young man attentively, and again he realized that he was talking to a man deadly in earnest, and moreover, grimly determined.

“ Then what do you intend to do ? ” he asked.

“ I hardly know, yet,” replied David. “ But on this I am determined. If, during the next three months, I am a failure ; if during that time I am unable to rouse the town to a sense of their vital need of Jesus Christ, and more, if I am unable to make the people realize that Jesus Christ is their *paramount need*, I shall place my resignation in the hands of the patroness of the living, and also in yours.”

“ A very sensible resolution, too,” replied the bishop, a little testily, and he thought of men in the diocese who would worthily fill the post of rector of Gildershaw.

What further would have been said I know not, but at that moment a servant knocked at the door and reminded the bishop of another engagement.

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“I must go now, Godolphin,” he exclaimed. “I shall be interested to hear how you get on.”

A minute later David was wending his way to the station, but the bishop still sat alone in his study chair.

“I wonder if I shall be obliged to take steps to get him out of the parish,” he reflected, “and yet how can I? Besides——”

CHAPTER XV

DAVID SPEAKS HIS MIND

WHEN David reached Gildershaw Rectory it was considerably past lunch time, and his mother, who was very meticulous about such matters, upbraided him for being late for his midday meal.

"Where have you been, David?" she asked.

"To——," he replied, mentioning the cathedral town.

"What, to see the bishop? Surely you didn't go in those clothes? Why, you look like a layman!"

"Yes."

"Did you see him? Had he heard about that disgraceful performance of yours yesterday morning?"

"I didn't know it was disgraceful," replied David. "But he had not heard anything, and I went to tell him about it."

"And what did he say?"

"Nothing of very great importance, I am afraid."

"David, I am ashamed of you," exclaimed the old lady. "If you had delivered the sermon you prepared, it might have led to your promotion. It might even have led to a stall in the cathedral."

"What do you know about the sermon I prepared?" asked David.

"I saw it lying on your study desk yesterday afternoon, and I read it," she replied. "It was a very good sermon. I saw reporters in the church, too, and if you had delivered it, I have no doubt it would have been reported in many of the papers; but instead——! Heavens, David, if you had not been a tee-

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totaller I should have thought you were drunk ! I suppose you know it is the talk of the town ? ”

“ No, I know nothing about it.”

“ Well, it is. I was talking with the gardener this morning, and he said that all the town is gossiping about it. Why couldn't you have preached the sermon you prepared, and thus made a good impression, instead of saying such wild things ? It is bound to get to the bishop's ears, and I shouldn't be surprised if trouble doesn't follow.”

“ The bishop knows all about it. I gave him the manuscript of the sermon I prepared, and I told him what I really said.”

“ And didn't he tell you that you ought to be ashamed of yourself ? ”

“ Not in so many words,” replied the young man.

“ But wasn't he angry ? Did you part on good terms ? ”

“ On the whole I think we did,” replied David, calling to mind as he spoke the look on the old man's face as they parted.

“ I am glad of that anyhow. Oh, by the way, there has been a telephone message from the Hall ; that girl Rashleigh wants to speak to you.”

“ Did she tell you what she wanted ? ” asked David quickly.

“ No, but she asked me to tell you to ring her up as soon as you returned. Have you any idea what she wants to speak to you about ? ”

“ Not the foggiest,” replied the young man.

Nevertheless, he was deeply interested, and wondered what Tamsin had to say to him. He remembered the look on her face as she sat in the Church on the previous day ; called to mind the expression of longing in her eyes. His heart beat violently too at the thought of hearing from her, for although David would scarcely own it even to himself, he realized that Tamsin was to him what no other woman could ever be. Ever since the night when on leaving the Hall he discovered his heart's secret, he had tried to drive her out of his mind. He had told himself again and again that it was madness on his part

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to think of her ; that nothing but misery could result from the mad love which burned in his heart for her.

His mother had scarcely left him when he heard the telephone bell ringing.

“ Is that you, Mr. Godolphin ? ”

“ Speaking.”

“ This is Tamsin Rashleigh. I rang you up this morning, but you were not at home. Can you come up to tea this afternoon ? I want to speak to you.”

“ Is it about anything in particular ? ”

“ Of course it is,” and he heard laughter in the girl’s voice. “ Do you think I would ask such a busy man as you to leave your work if it were not of the utmost importance ? You will come, won’t you ? ”

David had planned to call on all the ministers in the town that afternoon, in order to consult with them concerning the things which had been troubling him ; but he could not resist Tamsin’s plea, and soon after made his way towards the Hall. He excused himself for going by trying to think she had some plan for helping the bereaved people ; but he knew that his real reason for neglecting his other duties was that his heart was yearning for her.

“ I wonder if, after all, she is engaged to Grimshaw ? ” he asked himself, as he made his way along the drive. “ In any case it is madness on my part to think of her in the way I do.”

“ But she isn’t a pagan,” he reflected, as he neared the Hall. “ She is no more a pagan than Joan of Arc. She may pretend to be one, but at heart she is keenly alive to spiritual things. No girl could speak as she spoke last Tuesday night unless her life was moved to the very depths ; and unless she was altogether dissatisfied with the mere froth of things ; and yet——”

He had reached the door of the house by this time, and was quickly admitted to the room where Tamsin awaited him. But she was no longer the Tamsin of the Tuesday night before,

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no longer the Tamsin he had seen in Gildershaw Church on the previous day. There were no tears in her eyes, no look of unsatisfied longing on her face ; she had evidently cast all sad thoughts to the wind, and she spoke to him as though there was not a care in her mind.

“ This is splendid ! ” she exclaimed. “ I have induced the faithful pastor to leave his flock, and the grave scholar to forsake his studies in order to take tea with a feather-pated girl ; but I am not a bit ashamed of myself. In fact I rejoice in what I have done ! ”

“ Why ? ” asked David.

“ Because you need to be taken out of yourself ; because you have made yourself ill by thinking too much about your work. Remember the old Greek adage, my dear man : ‘ Let us eat, drink, and be merry. ’ ”

“ Finish the adage, Miss Rashleigh. ”

“ I shan’t,” she replied. “ Why should I ? I am not going to die just yet. Why think ; I am only twenty-three, and I have my life all before me. Why should I think about sad things ? ” And David, not being able to resist her laughter or the charm of her presence, was only too glad to forget the things which had been troubling him. He had not yet reached his thirtieth year. He was, in spite of everything, full of life and hope ; and above all, he was with the woman who, although his reason told him he was mad, he was not able to resist.

Nevertheless, the facts of life persisted in forcing themselves upon him. Try to forget it as he might, he was still rector of Gildershaw ; and the black shadow of tragedy rested upon the town.

“ Did you see me at Church yesterday morning ? ” she asked presently.

“ Of course I did. ”

“ Do you know why I went ? ”

“ Because it was natural that the patroness of the parish, and the lady of the manor should be present at the parish

church in order to show her sympathy with the mourners," he replied.

"Not a bit of it," she laughed. "I know I was silly and hysterical when you were here last Tuesday night. I expect my nerves were overwrought too; and I, silly chit that I was, gave way to my feelings. But common sense came to my aid directly you had gone, and I saw what a fool I had been."

"I don't believe it," replied David. "Moreover, if you did not go to church to show your sympathy with the poor people, what did you go for?"

"I went out of curiosity, Mr. Godolphin, sheer curiosity. I wondered what you would say and do.—Oh, you were funny!"

"I don't see where the fun comes in," replied David, who felt a little hurt at her flippant tones. "And surely you didn't ask me to come here in order to tell me that I was funny?"

Tamsin looked at him keenly. She knew that her light badinage had not deceived him, and that he was seeking to discover what her real purpose was in asking him to come there that day. Anyhow, she would tell him.

"Perhaps after all it was not funny," and her voice took on a new tone. "Mr. Godolphin, do you think you were wise in saying what you did yesterday morning?"

"I don't understand."

"Yes, you do. You know, you *must* know that the town is full of gossip about you, and that what you said has caused all sorts of wild talk. You must remember that, as far as Gildershaw is concerned, you are a public man, and that everything you say is noted and commented on."

"I wish that were true," he could not help replying. "As far as I can see I am of no more real importance than any Tom, Dick or Harry in the streets. Why only last Tuesday afternoon young Grimshaw told me that I did not affect the life of the town one button; and that I might as well not be here for all the influence I have."

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"Did he tell you that?" asked the girl quickly. "Anyhow you played tennis with him afterwards and beat him, didn't you?"

"Who told you that?"

"Never mind who told me. I heard about it, and Dick isn't a man who likes to be beaten either. I know Dick very well," she added.

"Are you going to marry him?" David could not help asking. "Because that also is the talk of the town."

"I shall marry whom I please," she replied curtly, and there was a hard, defiant look in her eyes. "But let us leave that question. We were talking about your sermon yesterday morning. Do you know you created a very bad impression?"

"I can't help that."

"But you must help it. Look here Mr. Godolphin, why can't you be reasonable? If you must go in for vagaries, follow the example of Father Hopwood, as he calls himself. Of course I shall despise you if you do, although you would have the bishop's blessing; but it would be better than talking like you did yesterday morning. People don't like to be told about their sins, and they object to their rector expressing doubts about the things he is supposed to believe. Of course I know that there is awful trouble in the town, and I know too that as a community we are becoming more and more heathen; but why should you trouble about it? Why should you get into hot water by stirring up the population, and saying such outrageous things as you said yesterday morning?"

"Because I couldn't help myself."

"Nonsense, my dear man. Now look here. I am going to talk to you plainly. There are two courses before you. One is to adopt the old safe lines, conduct the services in an orthodox and respectable way, and to take your proper place as rector of the parish. If you will do this there is no reason why you cannot have a happy and fairly easy time with us. The other is to take things seriously, to do as you did yester-

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day morning ; but if you do trouble will follow. Even now I shouldn't be surprised if an account of yesterday's doings doesn't reach the bishop's ears."

"It has reached them," replied David. "I went to see him this morning, and told him all about it."

The girl looked at him in blank astonishment.

"Do you mean to tell me that you gave the bishop a full report of what you said yesterday morning?" she asked excitedly.

"Why shouldn't I?" asked David.

"Why shouldn't you?" retorted the girl. "Why, you as good as admitted that you didn't believe in Christianity; at any rate, that was what the people took you to mean. You also said that Gildershaw was a pagan town, and that it was drifting to the devil. Then you accused a lot of respectable people of living like beasts."

"Well, isn't it true?"

"Even if it is true people don't like to hear their rector say it from the parish church pulpit. But besides all that, many of your friends are fearing what you will say next Sunday night. It is possible that the hard things you said yesterday morning might be explained away, or even justified; but many fear that you contemplate saying and doing unpardonable things next Sunday. Do be careful, Mr. Godolphin."

"I am afraid I don't understand you," urged David.

"Well then, I can tell you this. Unless you are careful you will be driven out of the parish, and I, although I am patroness of the living, will be unable to help you. I am afraid I cannot speak more plainly than I have spoken, but I know there are those in the town who are so angry with you that they would drive you out of it if they could; and if you repeat such things as you said yesterday morning they will."

"Miss Rashleigh," and David's voice took on a tone which showed how deeply in earnest he was. "You remember that conversation we had last Tuesday night?"

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"I was silly and hysterical," said Tamsin, as if again trying to excuse herself.

"You were neither silly nor hysterical. You were doubtless deeply moved, and it was no wonder you were. The experiences through which you passed at the colliery were enough to move anyone. Anyhow, I was brought up on my haunches, and I never felt what a fraud, what a useless parasite I was, until that moment. Hundreds of people were brought face to face with death. As you truly said, hundreds of men and boys went to work in the morning with a laugh and a joke on their lips, and they never returned again; they were dead. And I was there as a minister of Jesus Christ, and I felt myself dumb. I could say nothing with assurance, and although I had a vague belief that both in life and death there was a God who cared, I was sure of nothing. I am supposed to be a minister of Jesus Christ, and yet I am not sure of Jesus Christ. You upbraided me for my lack of certainty when I was here last, and you had reason for what you said. I seem to be certain of nothing—nothing. Perhaps I said more than I ought to have said yesterday morning, and yet I told only half the truth. Why, I heard last night after the service, that there were hundreds in the town, even among the so-called mourners, who were drunk. I will go further, Miss Rashleigh, and tell you what may offend you, but you must forgive me for that."

He thereupon related to her the conversation he had heard at the Tennis club.

"I don't say," he went on, "that there is not a great deal that is good in the town. More than that, I believe that there are hundreds, perhaps thousands who are longing, simply longing and hungering for a living gospel, and would gladly go to church if they could hear it there. And all the time I, the rector of the parish, am a mere parrot, a mere gramophone uttering worn-out platitudes. There is no life in the parish church, and from what I can hear there is no life in any of the churches. What I shall say next Sunday night I do not know."

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I am waiting and hoping that something will come to me, but I am going to say what I believe ought to be said. If I am convinced that God speaks to me I am going to tell it to the people."

David had started to his feet by this time, and was pacing the room rapidly. His eyes shone with a light the girl had never seen before, and his face was pale as death.

"I can't, I simply *can't* go on as I have been going," he went on. "Either Christianity is a great reality and can bring the people back to faith, or it is a worn-out legend. At present it seems to be the latter. I told the bishop this morning that unless, at the end of three months, a real vital faith has come to me, and come to me so powerfully that I shall be able to make the people believe in it too, I shall place my resignation in your hands, and in his hands."

"But you will not do that?" cried the girl.

"I must," he replied. "I simply must."

"But leave Gildershaw! I don't understand."

"That is what I told the bishop anyhow," replied David; "and it is what I am determined to do."

The girl gave him a quick glance, and then stared into vacancy. For a long time she sat in silence as if not knowing what to say; then turning towards him she said slowly, "Do you want to leave Gildershaw, Mr. Godolphin?"

"Want?" he replied almost passionately. "Why, I feel as though I would give my immortal soul to stay here."

"Then why talk such foolishness?"

"Do you want me to stay?" he asked, looking at her steadily.

"Of course I do. I want you to stay for several reasons."

"Tell me what they are."

"Well, first of all I want to spite the bishop. He is as mad as a hatter with me for choosing you, but I insist on maintaining my rights as patroness of the living and to appoint whatever clergyman I choose. If you were to resign it would, in a

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way, prove that I made a mistake in appointing you as rector here ; that is one reason for my hoping you will not resign. Another is that although you are not much of a preacher, you belong to my class. You have a sense of humour, too, and that is one of the greatest things in the world."

"Are those the only reasons, Miss Rashleigh ?"

"What other should I have ?——Oh, yes, there is another. I hate changes, and I should simply loathe having a new man at the rectory again ; so, now you are here, I hope you will stay."

Her tone was flippant, and yet to David her voice seemed hard. She was utterly different from the girl he had seen in that very room when he was there last.

"Is that all you wish to say to me, Miss Rashleigh ?"

"I think so. Are you annoyed with me for asking you to listen to a silly girl ? But you see, I feel in a way responsible for you ; and I was afraid lest you should say some hare-brained and unforgivable things next Sunday night. I don't want the man I have chosen to be rector to be driven out of the parish."

"Who wants to drive me out of the parish ?" asked David. "Of whom were you thinking ?" and he looked steadily at the girl as he spoke.

A slight flush surmounted her cheeks, and he thought she looked a little confused.

"I ask that," he went on, "because gossip travels fast. I heard before I went to bed last night that the man who is loudest in his denunciations of what I was trying to say yesterday morning was Dick Grimshaw. Has he been here ?"

He was angry with himself for asking the question. Nevertheless, as he saw the flush deepen on her cheeks he knew that the suspicion which had been born in his mind was correct.

"And if he has ?" There was a ring of defiance in her voice as she spoke, and he thought he saw anger flash from her eyes.

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"Has he told you that he intends driving me out of the parish?" he asked. "Was it his threat which caused you to try to warn me?"

"And if it was?"

David laughed a little cynically. The thought of Dick Grimshaw being at the Hall made him feel bitter. It disappointed him too to think that she should pay any attention to what this smug, coarse, commonplace, young Yorkshireman might say and do.

"It would be funny, that's all."

"What would be funny?"

"That a man like Grimshaw, who hasn't even a nodding acquaintance with a clergyman's work, should seek to interfere. Fancy Grimshaw interesting himself about my beliefs and doings."

"His father is the most generous supporter of Church institutions in the whole diocese." Tamsin was angry with herself the moment she had spoken; but the words had slipped out almost without thought.

"And because of that his son would have influence with the bishop, I suppose? Isn't it a ghastly commentary on the whole position of the Church?"

"What do you mean by that?"

"Mean by that!" cried David indignantly; "surely the fact speaks for itself. Here is a man who has no more real interest in true Church work than Bill Sykes, who can, because he is a millionaire, and because he can give huge sums to the institutions of the Church, so influence the bishop that the position of a rector to whom his son takes a dislike can be made untenable. But you needn't fear, Miss Rashleigh, I neither know nor care what influence Dick Grimshaw or his father have with the bishop. Whether I leave the parish or not will not depend on any influence in that quarter."

"Then what will it depend on?"

"On what I have told you," he said after a long silence.

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He longed to say more, longed to tell the girl of the mad thoughts which had surged in his mind even during that afternoon ; but he dared not. The very thought of doing so would more than ever alienate himself from her. He knew that his love for her was hopeless ; knew that her only interest in him was the fact that she had, under the influence of a whim, asked him to become rector there.

“ But you will be careful, won’t you, Mr. Godolphin ? ”

“ Which would you rather I were, Miss Rashleigh, careful, as you call it, or truthful ? Would you rather that I should, for the sake of having the bishop’s smile, utter well-worn platitudes ; or that I should try to get at the heart and meaning of my work ? ”

“ I don’t want you to be silly,” was her retort. “ I don’t want you to play into the hands of those who would do you harm.”

“ Why don’t you ? You have no interest in me beyond the fact that it was because you are the patroness of the living that I came here, have you ? ”

“ Good Heavens ! no,” cried the girl quickly. “ What interest should I have in you beyond that ? ”

“ No,” he replied, after a long silence, “ there is no reason why you should. Do you remember that night when I commanded you not to marry Dick Grimshaw ? Do you intend to marry him ? ” he asked suddenly.

Again anger sparkled in her eyes. “ Mr. Godolphin,” she said, and her voice had a little quiver in it. “ It may be that through my influence you came here, but I do not believe in the Confessional.”

“ You will not tell me then ? ” he persisted.

“ Certainly I shall not. Why should I ? ”

“ Because, if you do,” and there was suppressed passion in his voice, “ you will have to get another clergyman to call the banns. You will have to get someone else to marry you.”

“ Why ? ” and there was a bright light in her eyes.

"Because I won't," he replied.

"Why won't you?"

"Because it would be a crime; it would be sin against the Holy Ghost," he cried savagely. The girl laughed as if she were more than ordinarily amused at the angry way in which he spoke, nevertheless she sat for a long time in silence after he had gone.

"I was a fool," he reflected as he strode down the road. "I was worse than a fool. I have only angered her by uttering such mad words. All the same they were true."

He appeared forgetful of what he was doing or where he was when at last he let himself out of the park gates.

"What was it I meant to do this afternoon?" he asked himself presently. "Oh, I remember now—and of course I made her very angry; all the same, she wouldn't have tried to warn me if she hadn't some interest in me."

CHAPTER XVI

THEN GOD ANSWERED

ON the following Wednesday afternoon several men sat together in the Gildershaw Rectory. They had come at David's invitation, and having had tea, had accompanied him to his study.

Up to now they had seemed uncomfortable and ill at ease. Their conversation had been stilted and nearly all seemed to be wondering why the young rector had invited them there. The little gathering consisted of the ministers of the various Churches and Chapels in the town ; and while they regarded their host with evident gratitude for his brotherly overture, they were nevertheless puzzled to know the real reason for his action. Each of them had received a letter on the previous morning asking them to come, but as no reason was given, they were at a loss to know the meaning of it.

The Congregational minister was evidently regarded as the representative guest. He was a somewhat stern-looking man, and one who had a strong sense of his own importance. He had been educated many years before at the Lancashire Independent College, and took a very good degree at the Victoria University. He had been in Gildershaw for about fifteen years, and was the senior minister in the district.

"I say, Ratcliffe," he said to the Baptist minister whom he overtook on his way to the rectory, "what's the meaning of this ?"

"I don't know," replied Mr. Ratcliffe, a much younger

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man, who was of the strict evangelical school. "I suppose he has invited the whole lot of us?"

"It would seem so. I saw Bennett, the Wesleyan superintendent, this morning, and he told me that both he and his colleagues had received letters similar to our own; also that the other Methodist ministers intended coming. Were you ever invited to the rectory before?"

"Never."

"Neither was I," asserted Mr. Palmer, the Congregational minister. "I have lived fifteen years in Gildershaw, and never once during the whole time have I been asked there. Old Whitecross was a good old chap, but he wasn't very brotherly. Anyhow," he added, "I am not going to stand any sort of patronage."

"Neither am I!" replied Ratcliffe. "The days for that sort of thing are over. Do you know Godolphin, by the way?"

"Just enough to say good morning, no more."

"That's about the extent of my acquaintance with him. I hear he is a good fellow, however; have you heard what took place at the parish Church on Sunday morning?"

"Rather; everyone is talking about it. I suppose the old-fashioned Church people were tremendously shocked? Personally I think he was a little unwise. No doubt from our point of view Gildershaw is in a bad way, but I don't think such matters should be shouted aloud from the house-tops; they should be kept quiet. It is all very well to discuss such things amongst ourselves, but to preach about them is another matter."

"Perhaps that is why he has invited the whole lot of us up to the rectory this afternoon."

"Very likely."

As we have said, there was a certain amount of restraint during the time they sat at the tea table. Possibly this was because Mrs. Godolphin, who presided, looked upon them as an ill-assorted party, and did not appear genial. Altogether

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there were ten of them present, besides David. Mr. Palmer, the Congregational minister, who as we have said was looked upon as the representative among the visitors, took the lead in what conversation there was. There were also the Baptist minister, two Wesleyans, and two from what were called the minor Methodist churches. Father Hopwood was also there, conspicuous among the others in his cassock and biretta. Added to these were the Salvation Army Captain, together with the town missionary, who regarded himself as distinct from all the denominations. Then, last of all, was a young intellectual-looking man called McPhail, the minister of the Scottish Church which had been founded a few years before.

“Do you gentlemen smoke?” asked David when at length they were all seated in his study; and taking a box of cigars from his desk, he passed it around the room. “Perhaps,” he added, “a cigar will help to break down any feeling of reserve that may exist.”

All accepted his offer of the fragrant weed with the exception of the Salvation Army Captain and the town missionary, who looked upon smoking as a forerunner of many evil things.

“I am afraid you all regard it as a little strange that I have invited you to the rectory in this way,” began David a little awkwardly. “From what I can gather there has, in the past, been very little intercourse between the minister of the parish Church and the other ministers in the town. This has been partly my fault, and I am anxious to destroy anything which suggests exclusiveness. But that is not my only reason for inviting you here to-day. As you all know very well, Gildershaw, as a town, has passed through a very terrible experience. That experience, as far as I am concerned, has brought a great deal of my thinking to a head, and led me to consider my whole whereabouts as I have never thought of it before. That is why I have asked you to come here in the hope of getting your advice and help.”

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All present listened to him attentively, but made no remark. Mr. Palmer, the Congregational minister, looked inquiringly at the faces of the others as if wondering what was in their minds, while Father Hopwood, who was evidently intrigued, seemed a little annoyed at the trend of David's remarks.

"Before I came here," went on David, "I had never occupied what might be called a responsible position. During the War I was an army chaplain, and while working among the soldiers, I am afraid I formed no definite ideas about parish work. After the War was over I had three curacies, none of which I kept long. I needn't tell you particulars about that time," he went on; "and I need only say that during the time I worked in three country parishes my thoughts about a clergyman's duties were perhaps ill formed. When I came here, however, my eyes began to be opened. On the night before I visited Gildershaw for the first time, I had a long conversation with a friend who lives at Ben's Cross, and that conversation formed an epoch in my life. I was led to look on the Church, and on the duties of a clergyman in a new light. Then came my actual work here."

He paused a few seconds, and looked around among the faces of his visitors as though wondering if he had made the right beginning.

"You will forgive me for talking about myself in this way," he went on, "but I want to make my meaning absolutely clear, and my position as plain as possible." At this point he rose to his feet, and began to pace the room as his habit was whenever he became more than ordinarily interested. "Gentlemen, brothers," he went on, "are we satisfied with the condition of the town? Are we satisfied with the position which the Churches hold in the town?"

Still his little audience remained silent, as though determined to say nothing until they were absolutely certain what was in his mind.

"Because," went on David, "I have been, and am, abso-

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lutely staggered. Never have I felt more dismayed and hopeless."

"Why?" asked Mr. Palmer, speaking for the first time.

"Because, from what I can gather," replied David, "the whole town is growing more and more materialistic; because Christianity instead of gaining ground is losing it, and because the Churches appear to be almost without influence. At the present moment the whole lot of us seem to be beating the air. From every standpoint life has changed, and is changing; and from what I can gather it is not changing for the better. Of course, I want you to correct me if I am wrong; I, as a newcomer to the town cannot speak with the authority which some of you can, but from all I can gather, all I have said is true."

"Would you mind particularizing, Mr. Godolphin?" asked Mr. Palmer.

"To do that," replied David, "is as you know a little difficult, but I will do my best. As far as I can learn the one bright spot in the picture is that drunkenness is not so apparent as it was before the War; but in other matters there is little or nothing to boast about. Forgive me if I appear pessimistic. God knows it is the last thing I want to be; but consider our position. Here are eleven of us, all in our own way working for the same purpose. We all have our Churches and organizations, organizations on which we have spent much time and labour; and yet in spite of the large increase in the population, the actual attendance at the Churches is less now than it was fifty years ago! I am told that not one in ten of the population is in any way associated with the Churches. Not one in ten," he repeated, "in a so-called Christian town. Whether Gildershaw is better or worse than any other part of the country I will not argue, and for the moment it is not the point at issue; what I am thinking about is the town in which we live and work. Gentlemen, are we satisfied with this?"

"Let us go a little further. We have had a terrible colliery

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accident; more than a hundred have been killed. That accident has affected hundreds of houses in the town and district, and during the time of the accident and since it took place, I have visited scores of homes, and I have tried to find out the mentality of the people; and what have I found? Only rarely anything like a definite faith in a future life; paganism has gripped the life of the people. I am not saying whose fault this is, I am only telling you what I have seen and heard."

"There is, of course, another side to that," remarked Mr. Palmer, "as well as many explanations to offer. Still, we are very deeply interested in what the rector is saying, and perhaps it will be better to hear his summing up of the whole position before we have a conversation about it; for that I take it, Mr. Godolphin, is what you desire."

"Yes," replied David. "As I have told you I am deeply concerned about the work I am supposed to do here; and as you are all engaged in similar work, and I presume have similar difficulties, I have asked you to come here to think with me how a better state of things can be brought about."

"Please go on," said Mr. Palmer, as David hesitated.

"I hate going on in this strain," replied David. "But I feel I must tell you exactly what I feel. Take the standard of morality in the town. Again I don't know at first hand what it has been in the past; but from what I can gather from those who have lived and worked in the town for fifty years, and are in a position to know, our ethical standards have been lowered. Ideas about chastity among women, especially among our young girls, and all that kind of thing have far from changed for the better. Unfaithfulness in married life is regarded lightly, divorce is being laughed at, while loose opinions regarding some of the most sacred things in life are the order of the day."

"Then think of another thing. Think of the influence of the churches in relation to industrial troubles. As you are aware, it is not so long since a great strike convulsed the town

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and neighbourhood. What influence did the churches have during that strike ? Next to none.

“ These are the things which have stared me in the face since I came here. These are the things which in the main have troubled me. What shall we say in the face of them ? We are the ministers of a religion which has existed for nearly two thousand years and which we say is Divine. Why are we so helpless ? Why don't the churches attract the people ? Why has our religion no power to stem the tide of materialism ? Are we content to let things go on as they are going ? ”

“ For my part, Mr. Godolphin,” ventured Mr. Palmer after a long silence, “ I think you have given a very jaundiced, and therefore an untrue statement of what I think exists. I must of course agree with you that this is not a church-going age, neither is Gildershaw a church-going town. All the same, I maintain that religion is not dying ; the churches may be, but not Religion.”

“ Wrong ! wrong ! wrong ! ” ejaculated Father Hopwood fiercely. “ Religion is dying, and the reason why it is dying is that the altars of the Lord are forsaken ; and that the faith once for all delivered to the Saints is not truly proclaimed.”

The man's fanaticism blazed from his eyes, and quivered in his voice. Whoever else might be interested, it was evident from his every gesture that he was deeply moved. “ Perhaps I have no business here,” he went on, “ and perhaps had I known the nature of this gathering I should not have accepted the invitation which the rector sent. But since I am here I must speak. What you have said, Mr. Godolphin, is true. The town is drifting to the devil, and the reason for that drift is that we have not the true faith. Yes, I must say it, although I shall doubtless offend you ; but the truth must be spoken. Did not our Lord say ‘ there shall be one fold and one shepherd ? ’ and yet here in Gildershaw there are many folds and many shepherds. Until you forsake your errors, your schisms, your sects, and return to the one true Church the work of the

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living Lord is hindered. You mock the sacraments, you usurp sacred offices ; that is why the work of the Lord does not prosper in your hands. I have said this to you before, Mr. Rector, and I say it now to all of you who are here. I know my words are heard by unsympathetic ears, but I must speak the truth."

Then without another word Father Hopwood left the room.

"I am deeply sorry," said David, when he had left, "that Hopwood holds such views. He is a good fellow, and deadly in earnest, but as you see he is obsessed by a narrow idea of the Church, and spoke accordingly. Still, I am glad he came ; glad he spoke ; and I am sure we shall remember what he has said in our deliberations."

"I take it, Mr. Rector," it was the Rev. Douglas McPhail who spoke, "that you do not share his opinions. I take it that we all meet here as brothers and as equals."

"Certainly, as far as I am concerned," replied David heartily. "I have no narrow ideas about the Church or about apostolic succession. We are all brothers here, and as brothers we are equal whatever our views about purely ecclesiastical matters may be." The rector's reply tended to dispel the somewhat strained atmosphere which Hopwood's fanaticism had created ; and as the conversation became more general every suggestion of exclusiveness and bitterness was removed.

For half an hour various views were expressed, and various opinions offered. Doubtless, most of the men who had gathered there were sincere and earnest in their desire for the welfare of the Church, and the advancement of the Kingdom of Christ, but nothing was said that seemed to David to get at the heart of the matter. None of those present did more than touch the fringe of the situation. The Baptist minister urged that the lack of faith among people was owing to the fact that the inerrancy of the Scriptures, and the verbal inspiration of both the Old and the New Testament were practically given up. The Salvation Army Captain on the

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other hand, declared that the want of progress in the Churches was owing to the fact that the simple gospel was not preached.

"With me," he declared, "the whole matter is summed up in a few words. Sin means hell, and the blood of Christ is the only thing which can save men from hell." In his simple way he enlarged upon this, and he was in deadly earnest to make the others believe it. "All your scholarship," he declared, "all your reading and study, all your colleges are next to worthless. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin, and that is the heart of the whole thing."

"I am sure," said David kindly, "that we are thankful to our brother for speaking so plainly, but would he mind my asking him a question?"

"Ask any question you like, Mr. Rector," the Salvationist exclaimed.

"Do you preach what you have just told us?" David asked.

"I do, bless the Lord," replied the man. "I have preached it ever since I have been in the Army; the blood of Christ saved me from sin, and it can save others from sin."

"I am glad of that," replied David, "but that leads me to another question. What effect does your preaching have? Do the people crowd to your meetings? Are your services having any effect upon those who come? Do you have many conversions?"

"Some, bless the Lord," replied the man fervently.

"How many?" asked David.

At this there was an awkward silence which presently became almost painful. "I am asking these questions," went on David, "because I am anxious to know exactly how we stand. Of course I may have been wrongly informed, but I have been saddened to hear that the people who attend the Salvation Army services are becoming fewer and fewer. I have been also told that this is true of nearly every Church and Chapel in the town; is this true?"

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“Don’t you think, Mr. Godolphin,” persisted Mr. Palmer, “that you lay too much stress upon the actual Church attendance? I must admit, and admit sadly, that my own congregations are deplorably thin. But is this the true criterion by which we can judge? Can the effect of our work be tabulated?”

“What is the true criterion?” asked David.

“The general life of the people,” replied the minister. “Is not drunkenness decreasing? Is not the general behaviour of the people better?”

“As I said a little while ago,” replied David, “I gladly admit that there is less drunkenness than there used to be. I believe too that what, for want of a better term, I will call the manners of the people, are improving. Doubtless we owe much to the education laws which have been passed, but surely that doesn’t get to the root of the matter? Are we satisfied with the success or non-success which attends our work? What is the proportion of the young men of the town who care anything about their higher manhood? What percentage of them attend our Churches? Is not the whole drift of the town towards pleasure, and towards things sensual? Have we as ministers any real influence in the town? Is there any general interest in what we are striving after? For God’s sake,” he added passionately, “let us face facts.”

“If I may be forgiven for saying so,” urged one of the Methodist ministers. “I doubt whether the rector realizes what some of us have to contend with. He, as rector of the parish Church, lives in a beautiful and well appointed house. But take my own case; when I came to Gildershaw nearly two years ago I had hardly a decent chair to sit on, while the carpet on my study floor was simply deplorable. How can a man do his best work while he has to labour under such conditions? For my part, and I don’t mind admitting it, before I accept an invitation to another circuit I shall find out what sort of a house I am going to have. It isn’t as though the

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people haven't plenty of money," he went on, "they have; but they are mean and stingy; that's the trouble."

"And suppose your house was furnished as you desired," David could not help asking, "would you preach better, and would more people come to your services?" The minister who had spoken looked a little shamefaced at this; perhaps he realized how little he understood the thoughts that surged in the young rector's mind.

"I am sure," remarked Douglas McPhail, "that all of us must appreciate what Mr. Godolphin has said. Speaking as a Presbyterian, and as one who ministers to a fairly wealthy congregation, I have been saddened by what I have experienced since I have been here. The heads of families still come to Church on Sunday mornings, and I have no difficulties about money matters; but what troubles the rector troubles me; the sons and daughters of those families seldom or never come near my Church. The Sabbath day with them is a day of pleasure; I see them motoring, I see them playing tennis, I see them playing golf, I see them playing cards; but I seldom see them in the Church."

"Do you ever ask yourself why, Mr. McPhail?" asked the young rector.

"Yes, often," replied the other. "I suppose it is because it is not a church-going age. We are all drifting in the other direction."

"And where are we drifting? I see that a huge decrease of membership is going to be reported at one of the Methodist conferences, while the decrease of Sunday school scholars is simply staggering. Why is it? Is Christ dead, or is He not able to do what we claim for Him? Is Christianity a myth? Is it a played out force destined to die as other religions have died?"

"What are your own views about that, Mr. Godolphin?" asked the Baptist minister who had heard of David's Modernist views.

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“This is what I am wanting to get at,” cried David. “Look here,” and he turned towards his listeners with an intense gaze. “Do we really believe in Christ? *Are we sure of Christ? Is He as real to us as we are real to each other? Is that great gospel He came to proclaim a great victorious certainty with us?*” Then turning to Mr. Palmer, the Congregational minister, he went on in the same tense voice. “You, Mr. Palmer, are the senior minister in the town. Are you sure of God? Are you sure of Christ? *Sure*, mark you! Are you sure of a future life, or is it only a perhaps?”

“That’s a strange question to ask, isn’t it?” retorted the minister.

“Perhaps it is, but it lies at the heart of the whole business. Why was it that in the early days of Christianity the new faith swept over Europe like wildfire? Wasn’t it because St. Paul and the rest of the apostles preached with *absolute certainty*? Wasn’t it because they *knew*, definitely *knew* the truth of what they were preaching? Why did they face death with a shout of triumph? Why did those early Christians defy all the hosts of darkness? Wasn’t it because they were *conscious* of Christ, and as a consequence, *certain* of God? And isn’t that where we fail?”

“Do you accuse us then of preaching a faith in which we don’t believe?” asked the superintendent Wesleyan minister.

“God knows I accuse no man,” replied David. “I dare not; but I want to be absolutely honest. I am living in a realm of uncertainty. In a way I am sure enough,” and now he appeared to be talking to himself. “In a way I am certain that Christ lives; and I have no doubt about the Jesus of history. I have convinced myself by months of hard reading of the historical facts of Christianity, but if the promises of Christ are true, He should be as real to me and you as he was to the early Christians. John Wesley, after his conversion, had no doubt about His power and His presence. Have we? Oh forgive me, brethren, for talking like this, but it is a matter of life

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and death to me. I am beginning to love Gildershaw, love its life, love its people ; but I am afraid I shall have to leave it."

"Leave it !" was the general exclamation.

"Yes, and I will tell you why. I feel I am a blank, absolute failure."

"You a failure ? Why I am told that your congregations are nearly doubled."

"Nearly doubled !" cried David. "What are a hundred or so people in a town of many, many thousands ? What effect have I on the life of the town ? Anyhow, I shall resign my position here unless the faith of Jesus Christ becomes a tremendous certainty to me, and unless I can lead the people to believe in Christ in the same way as I believe in Him."

"I hope you won't do that, Mr. Godolphin," said more than one.

"I hope not too, for I tell you this ; I believe the people are hungering, just hungering for a living gospel. I believe that the cause of all this craving after excitement, the passion for gambling, the lust for pleasure and self gratification is because they haven't got Christ. I believe too, that Christ is the cure for all the industrial unrest, all the money grabbing, all the materialism which is cursing the age. Don't mistake me, I believe in pleasure ; I see no harm in dancing, in tennis, in golf, or in any other game. I don't believe Christianity was intended to deprive us of any healthy pleasure ; but the devil of it is that the people as a whole are putting these things first. Whereas Christ's message was: 'Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.'"

"Then it is your belief, Mr. Godolphin," said the Congregational minister, "that the reason why the age is not more religious is because we ministers don't half believe what we preach ?"

"Put it another way," said David. "I am almost sure that the reason for my own failure is because my own faith

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has been too much of a convention, and not enough of a reality. I have come to see that Christianity isn't a matter of details at all. It isn't a question of the inerrancy of the Scriptures, or of verbal inspiration ; it is not a matter of miracles, as they are ordinarily understood ; of the virgin birth or of the sacraments. It lies deeper. It is in the fact of Christ reigning in our own hearts ; it lies in the conscious certainty of His abiding presence with us. Having that I believe we have everything, without it we have nothing."

"And have you that conscious certainty ?" asked Mr. Palmer.

David shook his head and sighed. "That's where my trouble is," he replied. "That is why I have asked you here to-day. I have wondered whether you could help me to be certain of what, in spite of all I have said, is the greatest fact in the world. Are you certain, gentlemen, really certain ?" He looked around the room as he spoke, as if waiting for a reply, but waited in vain ; everyone seemed afraid to speak. "Is not that why we lack power ?" went on the young rector. "Why in heaven's name should people come to listen to our platitudes ? Why in the name of heaven should the poor wretches who lost their loved ones in that awful accident, and who are wondering about the future, come to us who are little better than blind leaders of the blind ? Why should the poor devils who are fighting with temptation, fighting with lust, fighting the thousand things which drag men to hell, come to hear you and me if we have no certain and triumphant gospel to preach ?"

This was followed by a long silence, after which young Douglas McPhail spoke again. "If I may, I should like to suggest something," he said, "but before doing so I want to tell Mr. Godolphin on my own behalf, how thankful I am to him for inviting us here. For that matter, I am almost glad that he has had the experiences of which he has told us, for he has thereby been able to open our eyes to the secret of all

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power. Whatever the others feel about it, I am afraid I have simply been playing at being a minister. I have wanted to preach fine sermons, and gain the approbation of my listeners. Like him, I have read hundreds of books concerning the historicity of Christianity, and I am afraid I have looked rather contemptuously upon ministers who have lacked the education with which I have been privileged, but he has led me to see the vital spot, the heart truth of the whole of our faith.

“And this is my suggestion,” he went on. “Let us pray, not only now, but always, until we have gained the divine certainty which is the source of power.”

He knelt down as he spoke, while the others in silence followed his example. Minute after minute passed, but no word was spoken. There was something in the atmosphere of the rector's study which seemed to make words poor. Even the Salvation Army captain who had been punctuating many remarks which had been made, by excited exclamations, was silent.

It was not until an hour later that the visitors departed, and when they did it was almost in silence; but all noticed that in the young rector's eyes was a strange light. He might have seen a vision.

CHAPTER XVII

CERTAINTY !

ON the following morning David visited the principal printer in the town, and gave him certain instructions. "These bills will cost a goodish bit, Mr. Godolphin," the printer said after he had taken down the particulars which the young Rector gave him. "I have never printed such large bills for the parish Church before."

"We won't trouble about the cost, Mr. Pollard," replied David.

"Perhaps you are going to pay for them yourself," suggested the printer, who was interested in the parish Church finances.

"Don't you fear, Mr. Pollard," laughed David, "the money will be forthcoming."

"But those bills of yours will be nearly as big as those outside the picture houses."

"And why not? If the wares we have to offer at Church are equal to those offered at the picture palaces, why shouldn't we let the people know about them?"

"Ay," replied the printer, "there's summat in that. If it pays the owner of the picture shows to advertise their wares, it ought to pay the Church too. But it doesn't always work out that way," he added.

"At any rate, you get them out at once, and see that they are posted to-night," and again the young Rector laughed.

"He seems very jolly about it, anyhow," thought the printer when David had left his office. "I never saw him look so happy before. He might have come into a fortune."

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That same evening the chief bill poster in the town was busily engaged in placing on the posting stations placards on which was announced in huge letters that, in the parish Church on the following Sunday evening, the rector would preach, and that the subject of his sermon would be, "What is Christianity?"

"I call that vulgar impertinence," said Dick Grimshaw, as he read the bill.

"I don't see why you should say that, Dick," was the retort of one of his workpeople, who stood near him as he read.

"But it is, Nathaniel. Vulgar impertinence."

"Why dost a' say that?"

"Well, for one thing it is what I call letting down the parish church. It's making it cheap. Anyone might think we were no better than a Dissenting Chapel, to see a big bill like that announcing the services. He is just trying to make himself popular, that's all."

"Well, what if he is?"

"There is another thing I don't like," went on Dick, without noticing the other's question.

"What's that?"

"Why, his subject. As you see, he is going to preach on 'What is Christianity?' Does he think we are a lot of heathens? Why should a young whippersnapper like that, almost new to the town, have the cheek to come here and tell us what Christianity is? As though we didn't know," he added.

"I'm noan sure as how we do," replied Nathaniel Butterworth, who, although he had been brought up in the Salem Sunday school, had not been to any place of worship for years. "Dost thou knaw, Dick?"

"I know that chap will get kicked out if he isn't careful, anyhow," replied Dick a little savagely.

"How can'st a' kick him out?" asked Nathaniel. "From

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what I 'ear, when a Church parson gets a job he can nearly do what he likes."

"That was in the old days," replied Dick. "But laws have been passed lately that give the bishops power to sack a man if he isn't faithful to the Church's doctrines."

"Then why is it that the bishop doesn't sack that chap Hopwood?" asked Nathaniel. "He's noan faithful to the Church's doctrines; he is just a Romanist, and nothing better; and from what I have been told he defies anyone to stop his Romish practices."

"That may be," replied Dick, "but Godolphin is a horse of a different colour, and he will have to be careful."

"Onyhow—" asserted Nathaniel, "I am going to 'ear yon chap on Sunday night. It is years sin' I wur inside either a Chapel or a Church; but I like what I am told he said last Sunday, and I am a bit curious to know what he has got to say about a subject like yon," and he nodded towards the bill which had occasioned the conversation.

Whatever may have been the opinion either of Nathaniel Butterworth or Dick Grimshaw, the young rector's announcement caused a great deal of discussion in the town, and many people who, as a rule, gave Churches a wide berth, determined to be present on the Sunday night. Doubtless the accident at Wentworth colliery had a great deal to do with this. People had been solemnized in spite of themselves, and more than one had been startled by the awful happening, as well as led to think of the inwardness of life and death.

"It is a curious business after all," remarked a miner to his mates as they made their way to the pit on the Monday afternoon following David's unusual address.

"What is a curious business?"

"Everything," replied the man. "Why, just think, laast Monda', Bill Bagshaw and his two boys, Joe and Harry, wur 'ere with us. Where are they now?"

"Dead," remarked one.

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"Ay, but dost tha mean to say that they are dead for ever ? Do yo' knaw that when I went down i' t' pit two days after they wur killed, I wur sure that they wur there."

"Well, Bill wur a good chap."

"Ay, but what of t'others ? There wur a lot of bad chaps that wur killed. Where are they now ? It is a big mystery, after all."

Thus many talked and wondered, and scores who had been little given to thinking about the deeper things of life were led to pause as they reflected on the awful happening.

Doubtless, too, the unconventional address which David had given, and which set the town gossiping, added to the interest of the announcement. He had given a special invitation to his hearers to come to the Church on the following Sunday, giving as his reason that he believed he would have something to say worthy of their hearing.

Would the sermon he was announced to preach be a fulfilment of his promise ?

Tamsin Rashleigh, although she had not been in Gildershaw during the week, became cognizant of David's announcement. More than one of the servants had gone into the town, had seen the bills, and reported it to their mistress. On the following Saturday Tamsin was making her way to her car when she saw David passing, and stopped to speak to him.

"Well, Mr. Godolphin," she said as they shook hands. "Are you going to leave us ?"

"Leave you ?" queried David.

"Yes, you remember the threat you made when you were up at the Hall last Monday, don't you ? Are you going to carry it into effect ?"

She looked at him questioningly as she spoke, and like Mr. Pollard, the printer, was struck by the light in his eyes.

"I don't think so," he replied, and there was laughter in his voice.

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"You looked awfully ill and miserable last Monday," she went on. "Are you better?"

"Why do you ask?" he queried.

"Because you look different. Has anything happened?"

He did not reply to this, but Tamsin noticed that his lips were quivering, and that his eyes still shone with the light which had impressed her. "Something has happened," she went on. "Won't you tell me about it?"

"I would love to have a chat with you," was his reply, "but not here. Are you very busy? Have you finished your shopping? because——"

What he would have said further I do not know, but at that moment both heard another voice, and turning they saw Dick Grimshaw.

"This is luck!" and the young manufacturer's voice was joyful. "I want to see you badly, Tammy. Can you spare me a few minutes? Are you going back to the Hall? May I get in with you? Excuse me, Mr. Godolphin," he went on, turning towards David, "but I want to speak with Miss Rashleigh particularly," and with the air of a proprietor he opened the door of the car by which they had been standing.

Before Tamsin had time to reply David lifted his hat and walked away. The presence of the young manufacturer had somehow made it impossible to continue the conversation which had been born in his mind.

"Do you think it wise of you to do that?" Dick asked Tamsin after he had helped her into the car, and taken his seat by her side.

"To do what? I don't understand."

"Stand talking in the street with that fellow."

The girl did not reply to this, and an onlooker would have said that she was not too well pleased at his having appeared.

"Look here, Tammy," he went on, "are you no better than the rest of the modern girls? You may be a bit of a flirt, but I have always looked upon you as the soul of honour. I know

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I am no better than I ought to be, but whatever else I believe in, I have always believed in you. If I lost faith in you I believe I should go completely to the devil."

Tamsin did not reply to this; indeed, she remained silent while the car swept through the park gates, and moved rapidly towards the house.

On the following morning the sun rose bright and clear. As we have before stated, Gildershaw was not situated in what was called the manufacturing district of Yorkshire, and was thus outside the smoke zone. It was true there were several mills in the town, the smoke of which did a great deal to pollute the air, but as they were invariably closed on Saturdays, it had almost the appearance of a country market town at week-ends.

A larger congregation than was usual gathered in the Church that Sunday morning, but David was not there to see it. He had arranged during the week to officiate at a neighbouring Church, while the vicar of the parish to which it belonged did duty for him.

When Sunday evening came, however, he was back at the rectory, and was more than ordinarily excited. It seemed to him that he was entering on a new era of his life, and that his past experiences had been but preliminary to what now lay before him. He knew from what he had heard that an extraordinary amount of interest had been aroused concerning the evening service; not only by his announcement of the previous Sunday, but by the placards which had been placed on the walls.

"I hope and pray I may be able to say the right things," he reflected. "It will be awful if I can't. Everything seemed plain and clear to me yesterday morning, but now——"

There was no doubt he had been much disturbed by Dick Grimshaw's interruption of his conversation with Tamsin Rashleigh. He told himself again and again that the thoughts which, in spite of his repeated resolutions not to entertain them,

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persisted in his mind, were not only foolishness, but madness. Yet, even now, an hour before the service on which he had built so much, he was troubled, and more than troubled by Grimshaw's attitude. He remembered what he had said to her on the previous Monday. He had told her that he would not call the banns of marriage between her and Grimshaw at the parish Church. He had told her too that it would be a sacrilege and a crime to officiate at her wedding ; but more than this came to him now. Could he stay in the parish knowing that Grimshaw had married her, and that he was master at the Hall ?

The other thing which disturbed him seemed but a little matter, and yet it affected his overwrought nerves as he thought of the ordeal which lay before him. His mother, proud of her association with the great Godolphin family, and having very strict ideas as an old-fashioned Churchwoman, had spoken to him very plainly in relation to the conduct of the services on the Church.

"Now, David," said the old lady as they sat at tea, "don't be silly, and for heaven's sake don't repeat the performance of last Sunday. In my opinion you degraded a clergyman's position by talking in such a way, and I hope that if you attempt any such nonsense, you will remember that your mother has her own ideas about how a rector of such a parish as Gildershaw should conduct himself."

This, as we have said, seemed a small matter, and yet because it was so utterly out of accord with the things he had in his mind to say, he found it difficult to concentrate his thoughts.

Thus it came about that presently when the Church bells rang out, proclaiming that the hour for the evening service drew near, he felt altogether ill at ease.

"It makes one believe in a personal devil," he said to himself as he left the rectory, "who is determined to nullify and to destroy the influence of what I have to say."

The glory of the weather, however, and the chirping of the

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birds in the trees which grew in the old churchyard, calmed him ; and when presently, on entering the vestry, he called to mind the conversation which had taken place between himself and the ministers of the town, the disturbing influences which had affected him seemed to pass away. He had not been in the vestry more than a minute when the two churchwardens entered.

"By gum, this is a go, Mr. Godolphin," one of them exclaimed. He was a foreman in one of Miss Rashleigh's mills in the town, and prided himself upon being the people's warden. "I have been churchwarden here for twenty years," he went on, "and I never saw nothing like it before."

"What is the matter ?" asked David.

"Well, there is nowt the matter, except that the Church is crowded. There are more than a thousand people inside now, and there are more coming every minute. They are beginning to bring in chairs from the Church Hall. Ay, I never saw anything like it before !"

"It's true enough," said the Rector's warden, looking towards David earnestly. "Just fancy, the old Church which hasn't been filled sin' I wur born, and I am fifty-nine next birthday, is just packed to-night. Why the congregation which came to hear the bishop on the night you were inducted, is simply nothing to what's there now. There are hundreds of people who haven't been in Church since I can remember. I hope you won't disappoint them, Mr. Godolphin. There has been a great deal of gossip through the week," he added. "I dare say you know that people will talk."

"What have they been talking about ?"

"What you said last Sunday morning," replied the man. "I tell you it fair startled us all. The people have come out of curiosity," he added, "there is no doubt about that."

As presently David followed the choir boys into the Church and made his way to his own stall, he felt like a man in a dream. He could not realize that more than a thousand

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people crowded the great building in order to hear what he had to say ; and when presently he rose from his knees and faced the great congregation, his mind refused to fasten upon the things which had come to him. He reflected, moreover, that he had not written a discourse ; he had simply jotted down a few headings to guide his memory, because he felt that anything like a manuscript would hamper him. When he rose to his feet, however, to read the opening passages of the stately old Church service, the disturbing influences seemed to pass away ; and his mind became tense again.

“ God help me to utter the things which have come to me,” he prayed.

Probably the rector's warden was right when he said that the people had come to the Church largely out of curiosity ; nevertheless, a tense feeling prevailed. Never within the memory of man had such a congregation gathered ; people of all sorts and conditions were there. Many of what were called the “ old families ” who had scarcely ever been seen in the Church on a Sunday evening before, were there that night, while crowds of men, who during the years had altogether given up the habit of Church going, thronged the pews. Rough-looking colliers were there, as well as a number of others who claimed to belong to the more refined classes. As the service proceeded moreover, the interest became more and more manifest ; the prayers and collects, which, stately and beautiful as they were, had been regarded by many as of but little account, revealed new meanings ; and presently when, during the singing of a hymn, David made his way from the rector's stall to the pulpit, more than a thousand pairs of eyes were fixed on him, as though a great wonder possessed the minds of the people.

“ May the words of our mouth, and the meditations of our heart be acceptable in Thy sight, Oh Lord our strength and our Redeemer.”

No sooner had David uttered this invocation than a great

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silence brooded over the whole Church, while a feeling of awe crept into many hearts. Why this was no one seemed to know, yet so it was.

“ I have announced as my subject to-night,” David began, “ ‘ What is Christianity ? ’ As I told those of you who were here last Sunday morning, I have been troubled greatly as to why the people of Gildershaw seem to have no interest in religion, and seldom or never come to Church. Because Christianity is either a worn-out fable, or it is the greatest thing in the world. Which is it ? ”

He paused here, and looked steadily at the sea of faces turned towards him.

“ If it is the former,” he went on, “ it is no wonder that you give it so little thought and refuse to come to Church to hear about it. If it is the latter, our best thoughts and our energies should be devoted to a right understanding of it.

“ You know the story of Jesus Christ. Nearly two thousand years ago a child was born in a little tract of country on the Eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea. As to what He said or did during the first thirty years of His life we know very little, but on reaching thirty years of age he became the chief interest in the lives of thousands of people. He uttered some of the sublimest truths ever known. He struck at the root of the conventions of the time. His teachings superseded those of the Rabbis and philosophers. He revolutionized the thoughts of the people, and He spoke to them as man never spoke before. He made tremendous claims too. He claimed to be the Son of God, the revelation of God. He claimed to set up the kingdom of God on earth, the kingdom of peace, and mercy, and love and joy. He declared that He was the life of the world, and that whosoever accepted Him had eternal life in their hearts. He possessed wonderful powers too. He healed the sick, gave sight to the blind ; cured people of their diseases, and gave new life to those who were dead.

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“The effect of His teaching was miraculous. People followed Him in great crowds, and hung upon the words which fell from His lips. He was the greatest enemy to sham and pretension that was ever known. He paid little respect to many old time beliefs. Ancient ceremonials and conventions were treated with the respect that they deserved. As a consequence, the heads of the Church at that time hated Him, and determined to kill him. They did kill Him. He was crucified on a little hill outside the walls of Jerusalem, and the heads of the Jewish church thought they had destroyed Him for ever. But it was not so. He was seen again after His death by those who had followed Him. He was seen by large numbers of people, and then before He finally left them He uttered words which have rung down through the ages. He told His disciples that they must preach the gospel He had taught them throughout all the world, and He gave a promise such as no man had ever given before. ‘Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.’

“That in brief, and in barest outline, is the story of Christ. But for that story this Church and all the other Churches in town and country would never have been built. But for that story the world would be very different to-day. It is my purpose during the coming days to tell you what effect that story has had upon the nations of the world. How the teachings of this man of Nazareth superseded the philosophies of the ages, and revolutionized the lives of millions. I want to tell you too, how, as the years passed by, the simple teachings of Jesus became intermingled with the paganism and ceremonialism of heathen countries ; and I shall do my best to set forth to you the great outstanding and fundamental sayings of Christ, and thus reveal to you His infinite secret.

“And now to come to the subject I have announced for my address to-night. What is Christianity ? ”

David paused here, and again looked steadily at the great sea of faces. He might have been trying to read the minds of

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the people who listened to him, trying to understand the effect of what he was saying.

"My friends," and his voice was trembling as he uttered the words. "I am not here to preach a learned sermon about Christianity, or to analyse the doctrines which have been associated with it. This might be wise or it might not; for my own part I don't think it would be. Christianity, as I understand it, can be summed up in one word. Christ. He is the centre and circumference of Christianity. He is the all and in all of Christianity. Listen to His own words. 'I am the way, the truth, and the life.' 'I am the light of the world.' 'He that believeth on Me hath eternal life.' 'I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth on Me though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on Me shall never die.' If you will read the story of Christ, as it was set forth in the writings of those who witnessed His doings and heard His words, you will find that this is made manifest in many ways. Christianity is faith in, and acceptance of Christ; nothing more, nothing less.

"The Church is not Christianity. The Church consists of men and women of whatever name or sect who believe in Christ, and seek to obey Him; but as you will see it is not Christianity. The Church may be a means of extending Christianity—of sending it throughout the world, but it is not Christianity. Christianity is Christ.

"Ceremonialism, ritualism, sacramentarianism are not Christianity; these things may be helpful to some minds in seeking to realize Christ, but they are not Christianity. For my own part, and I say it with all reverence, they do not help me. God forbid that I should utter one word of condemnation on those who find help by such means; but never let us forget that they are only means. Christ is the centre of Christianity."

Again David paused and looked around him. Up to now he had not got at the heart of the things he wanted to say, and

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he knew by the look on many of the faces of those who listened to him that although they might agree with what he had said, he had not touched the thing that was vital in their hearts.

“And now, my friends, I want you to follow me a step further, for I am approaching the thought which, as it seems to me, has lain at the heart of my difficulties, and perhaps of your difficulties. Many of you may be saying ‘Are you not begging the whole question? Are you not taking it for granted what it is next to impossible to prove? How do we know that Jesus Christ is what He claimed to be? How do we know that He rose from the dead, and ascended into Heaven? How do we know that His words ‘Lo, I am with you always,’ are true?’”

“That is the thing I want to get at, that is the crux of the whole matter. For I tell you, and I tell you with all humility and frankness, that I have not been sure of this. I, like millions of others, have had a kind of conventional belief that the story of Christianity is true, but I have not been sure. As a consequence, I have during the time I have been rector of this parish only uttered platitudes. That is why my words have lacked life and conviction.

“As you know we have lately had a terrible happening in this town. The colliery accident which has blighted so many homes, and caused so much sorrow in your midst is still in your hearts and memories, and will remain there for many years to come. As you know too, I went to the colliery during that sad time when the victims were brought to the surface. I tried to speak words of comfort to those who were bereaved, to bring light and hope to those whose hearts were torn and bleeding, but as it seemed to me I spoke in vain. And why did I speak in vain? Because I was not sure of anything. I hoped, yes, in a way I believed, in what Christ taught, but I was not certain.—No, I was not a hypocrite, I did believe, but my belief was only conventional.

“When thinking over this a little later I went through a

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great agony of soul, and I determined that if it were possible to become sure, I would become sure.

“Then came last Sunday morning. Many of you came here bewildered, well-nigh mazed by what had happened. Perhaps you did not know it, but I was certain you wanted some great triumphant message of certainty to cheer you, but I could not utter one ; I had none to give.

“And yet in my heart of hearts I knew there *was* a message, a certain message, a triumphant message ; that is why I said what I did say.

“Last Monday I went to see the bishop of the Diocese, and told him that unless I became sure of Christ, that unless I became triumphantly convinced of the truths I came here to proclaim, I should place my resignation in his hands. I told him more than that ; I told him that unless I became so convinced of the fact of Christ and the truth of Christ, that I could make you, the people of Gildershaw, believe as I believed, I should no longer remain among you.”

Again he paused, while a kind of quivering sigh rose from the vast concourse of people. That they were deeply interested there could be no doubt. The attention they paid him was almost painful, while the quivering sigh seemed to emphasize it.

“Last Wednesday,” he went on, “my brother ministers paid me a visit at the rectory. I had asked them to come there that we might discuss together the things which had been troubling me,—for I was troubled, deeply troubled. . . . As I told you last Sunday, there are many things in this town that are good and beautiful, but on the other hand I could not help realizing that as a whole Gildershaw is drifting to paganism. Faith in Christ was dying out, and vice in its many forms was laying its stranglehold upon the people. Mammon seemed to be triumphant. Lust for pleasure, lust for excitement, gambling, drinking was more and more becoming the order of the day, while God seemed to be forgotten. I felt too that as

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Churches we were becoming less and less influential among the people's lives, and less and less necessary to them, and I wanted to know the reason why. That was why I asked my brethren to come and see me, and discuss the whole situation. We talked long and earnestly, some saying one thing, some another. Then an hour or so before we separated one of my brethren, the Reverend Douglas McPhail, called us to prayer. We all fell on our knees although no-one spoke a word, but while we knelt I had a consciousness that Christ was near.

"After my brethren had gone I sat far into the night thinking and praying, and as I did so I learnt the great secret.

"We read in the Acts of the Apostles that, after Christ's resurrection, the followers of Jesus gathered in an upper room and prayed; and that when the day of Pentecost was fully come there came a sound as of a mighty rushing wind, that filled the house where they were sitting. I had no experience like that, indeed, I can't put into words what came to me. Probably all that I have been going through since I came to Gildershaw prepared the way for that night's experiences. For as I told you, I have been much perturbed, and moved to the very depths with doubt and bewilderment; for that reason I have read much and thought much about the great secret which I have been trying to learn. Be that as it may, the truth came to me."

Upon this he was silent for perhaps a minute, and the great congregation waited for what he would say next, and watched him, while as it seemed to them he struggled to express himself.

"Men and women of Gildershaw," he said presently, "brothers and sisters, I want to tell you here in this house of God, here in this building hallowed by so many memories, that Christ is real to me. I am sure that He is alive. I am sure that He is here to-night. I am as conscious of His presence as

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I am of yours. I cannot tell you why I am sure of Him any more than I can tell you why I am sure a flower is beautiful, or that the morning air on the hill tops is sweet ; but I am sure. And because I am sure of Him I am sure of God. Sure that He is like Jesus who revealed Him to me, and because of that I am not afraid. I know that behind everything, behind pain, sorrow, bewilderment, death, hell, God is.

“What is Christianity ? Christianity is Christ. It is to have Christ near us, in us, our constant friend, our Saviour.”

Then instead of uttering the formula usually associated with the closing of a sermon he asked all present to join with him in silent prayer, asking God to reveal Himself to all through Jesus Christ.

A few minutes later the Church was empty. Slowly and quietly the people left the great building, and wended their way towards their homes. There was little or no discussion ; there seemed nothing to discuss, but doubtless all were deeply moved by what they had heard.

David sat in the rector's vestry alone. The choir boys, the churchwardens, the sexton—all had gone ; and a great silence pervaded the building.

He heard a knock on the outside, and the door opened. “May I come in, David old man ?”

“Why it's Nick ! Nick Trebartha ! I am glad to see you, old chap. You must come into the rectory and have some supper with me.”

“No, he mustn't.” It was Tamsin Rashleigh who spoke. “And you are not going to have supper at the rectory to-night either, Mr. Godolphin. There is a car at the Church gates, and we are all going together to the Hall for supper.”

“But my mother——”

“I have spoken to your mother, and she quite understands. Come in, Naomi. You *are* rude, Mr. Godolphin. Fancy my friend coming all the way from Ben's Cross to hear you, and

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you don't even speak to her ! Are you vexed because we have the temerity to invade your sacred sanctum ? ”

“ Vexed ! ” cried David. “ Why this is simply great,” and he laughed like a boy. “ I am as hungry as a hunting spaniel too. Thank you for asking me to supper, Miss Rashleigh.”

CHAPTER XVIII

AFTERWARDS

“**W**ERE you in Church, Nick?” asked David, when presently they were seated in the car.

“Of course I was.”

“I didn’t see you. And was Naomi there too?”

“We were all there,” laughed Tamsin before Naomi had time to reply. “Do you know, Mr. Godolphin, that directly after our talk last Monday I telephoned Naomi, and told her about our conversation; of course she, womanlike, professed her desire to come to hear you, and I couldn’t do any other than invite them over.”

“I am awfully glad we came, David,” asserted Naomi who caught David’s hand as she spoke.

“I say, none of that, old chap,” laughed Nick as he looked quizzically at his friend.

“None of what?”

“You were squeezing my wife’s hand,” declared Nick, “and that’s a very improper thing to do.”

“He shall if he likes,” retorted Naomi. “You say that David is your friend, and if he is your friend, he is of course my friend; and if he likes to squeeze my hand——”

“Why of course I shall,” and again David laughed.

It was a merry party which reached the Hall a few minutes later. Quips and jokes were the order of the day, while laughter, especially among three of them, seemed contagious. Nick and David were evidently delighted to see each other again, while Naomi rejoiced at being in her friend’s house.

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The only one of the four that appeared restrained and ill at ease was Tamsin Rashleigh. She, while she tried to enter with zest into the merriment of the others, had a far away and almost fearful look in her eyes, as if, while she tried to be thoughtless and gay, she dreaded some untoward happening. Indeed, throughout the whole of the simple meal that night, Tamsin's behaviour was difficult to explain. Sometimes she laughed hilariously, and seemed to find amusement in everything ; while at others, David, who was watching her closely, saw that she looked wretched and fearful.

Not a word was said about the service at the Church ; indeed, Tamsin appeared anxious to avoid any reference to it. More than once when the conversation seemed to be drifting in that direction, she interposed with some remark that was altogether alien to anything that might be regarded as religious. Nevertheless, a close observer would see that she watched David narrowly, and noted his frequent laughter.

When supper was over, however, and the little party adjourned to what she called her snugery, a small room into which visitors were seldom admitted, a change came over her. The look of apprehension which David had not failed to note earlier in the evening left her, and she appeared to be altogether carefree.

" You said you didn't see me in Church, Mr. Godolphin ? " she asked presently.

" I saw that the Hall pew was full, but I didn't see you there," he replied.

" No, we didn't sit there. It is years since I have been to Church of a Sunday evening, and the sidesmen doubtless thought they were at liberty to fill it with strangers. I thought old Jeremiah Ramsbottom would have fainted when he saw me come in. ' By gum ! ' he exclaimed. ' Yo doant mean yo' 'ave coom to Church, Miss Rashleigh ? Why the Hall pew is jam full. I never thought as 'ow you'd be here ; but there, yo' "

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should 'ave told us yo' wur coming.' Of course I told the old man not to bother, but I could see that he was terribly grieved ; especially as he had to put us into a pew which was hidden from the pulpit by a huge pillar. ' I never seed owt like it afore i' Gildershaw,' he declared as he left us. Weren't you excited, Mr. Godolphin, when you saw such a crowd of people ? " she added.

" I expect I was," replied David, " but I hardly thought of it."

" What were you thinking of then ? "

" I expect I was thinking of what I had to say," he replied. At this there was a short silence which at length was broken by Nick Trebartha.

" David old man," he said quietly. " Do you remember that first night you spent at Mythamroyd several months ago ? "

" I shall never forget it," replied David. " Why ? "

" Because I think to-night was associated with it. You said almost the same words that I happened to use then."

" What were they ? "

" I said that either Christianity was a worn-out fable or it was the greatest thing in the world. You made us all realize that it was the latter," he added.

" Did I ? I wanted to badly ; in fact it was the great thing I had in my heart all the time."

" Mr. Godolphin," and Tamsin spoke again. " You will forgive me for speaking plainly, won't you ? "

" Of course I will. Why shouldn't you speak plainly ? "

" You were trying to say a big thing," went on the girl, " a very big thing. I think it might have been said better, indeed from that standpoint—please forgive me for being rude—your address was a failure."

" I was afraid it was," replied the young rector humbly. " I didn't write anything for fear of being hampered by my manuscript, now I almost wish I had ; and yet I don't

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know. I tried to say the thing which had become real to me, and I hoped I had not altogether failed."

"No, I don't think you did," replied the girl; "although it was not well expressed, I think the people saw what you meant. But, Mr. Godolphin, is what you said true? I mean," she added, "is it true that you are sure of the tremendous things you were talking about?"

"I meant everything I said," replied David. "Why?"

"Because I don't understand."

"Don't understand what?"

The girl waited a few seconds before replying, then she went on hesitatingly. "I find it awfully hard to express myself," she confessed. "I expect it is difficult to put one's deepest thoughts into words," she added as if in explanation, "but I can't understand this. You made us all feel terribly solemn to-night, so solemn that for a time I was almost frightened. Not that I believe it," she added, "it is too much of a fairy story for that; but how you, who were talking about such tremendous things during Church time, could laugh and joke so flippantly immediately afterwards, I can't imagine."

"Have I been flippant?" asked the young rector. "I didn't mean to be. As for my laughter, I see nothing incongruous about that; in many ways I never felt so light-hearted in my life as I feel now."

There was a look of wonder in the girl's eyes as she turned towards him. "Light-hearted!" she repeated. "Are you light-hearted?"

"Why shouldn't I be?"

"You spoke about the awful happening at the colliery," urged the girl. "You referred to the fact that these men who went down to the pit and were killed there would never see the daylight again. You mentioned the homes that were blighted, the lives that were darkened for ever. How can you be light-hearted in the face of such things?"

"Perhaps light-hearted is the wrong word," replied David.

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"You remind me of an incident which happened in our village when I was a boy. An old man lost his only daughter; she died when she was seventeen, and yet the old man directly he heard of her death went around praising God for His goodness; and telling of the joy he would have of meeting her again. No doubt he was grieved; indeed, in a sense he was almost broken hearted; nevertheless, he rejoiced. You have read Alexander Dumas, haven't you?"

"Years ago," replied the girl.

"Have you read his Count of Monte Cristo?"

"Yes," replied the girl, as if in wonder.

"Do you remember the great scene in the Chateau d'If?"

"Yes, what of it?"

"Then you will remember how Dumas describes young Edmund Dantes cursing in his despair and calling upon God at the same time. You will remember too that an old priest who was near by heard him and said: 'Who talks of God and despair in the same breath?' That is what I feel, Miss Rashleigh. Despair is impossible if you believe in God, if you are sure of God. That is why I am light-hearted."

"Nonsense," and the girl spoke almost savagely. "Yes, I mean it, Mr. Godolphin."

"I am afraid I don't understand you, Miss Rashleigh," and he looked at the girl wonderingly.

Tamsin hesitated for a time as if undecided whether she should speak further, then she burst out in the same angry tones: "Look here, Mr. Godolphin, were you ever in love?"

David was silent. Never had he been asked a question which was so difficult to answer. Never did he love the girl who asked the question as he loved her now; and in spite of all the experiences through which he had passed, he never longed for her as he longed now. So when her question came he was unprepared.

She went on, "Suppose a case; suppose you, David Godolphin, rector of Gildershaw, who have talked so freely about

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God to-night, were deeply in love with someone, and suppose too, that your love was hopeless. Go further, and suppose you knew that the girl you loved was going to give her life to a man whom you believed was utterly unworthy of her, and would drag her down to his level; would you be light-hearted—happy?"

What David would have replied I do not know. Her question tore at his heart strings, and made him wonder whether she had any idea of his madness. Before an answer was possible, however, a knock came to the door, and as if to make a ghastly comment on Tamsin's question, a servant announced that Mr. Dick Grimshaw was in the house and wished to speak to her.

A minute later Dick Grimshaw was admitted into the room. "You look a happy family," he exclaimed as he gave a quick glance around. "How do you do, Mrs. Trebartha?" and he shook hands cordially with the girl. He also spoke in a friendly fashion to Nick, but simply nodded to David as though displeased at his presence.

"Were you in Church to-night?" asked Tamsin.

"In Church? No. Good heavens, what made you ask such a question? I have something better to do with my time. I have just come from the golf links," he added.

"For shame," ejaculated Tamsin gaily. "Evidently you don't make the most of your opportunities. Why, Mr. and Mrs. Trebartha have motored all the way from Ben's Cross in order to be at the service to-night."

"You don't mean that, Trebartha?" and he turned towards Nick as he spoke.

"I wouldn't have missed it for anything," replied the young Cornishman.

"Well, there is no accounting for tastes, but if what I hear is true, I can't understand how any full grown man could have been interested in the goings on at the Gildershaw Parish Church to-night."

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"What have you heard?" asked Nick, who was a little nettled at the tone which Grimshaw had adopted, and felt like taking up the cudgels on behalf of his friend.

"Of course, it is the talk of the town," replied Grimshaw. "People were discussing the rector's sermon as though he had said something remarkable. As I said before," he added, "there is no accounting for tastes, and as that kind of thing doesn't appeal to me I had better say no more about it."

There was studied insolence in his every word, and an evident desire to wound the young rector. So much was this the case that Tamsin felt like openly rebuking him for his rudeness. Indeed, she felt ashamed that a man, visiting her house as her friend, should have acted so like a clown; but she did not speak; something seemed to seal her lips.

Dick Grimshaw's entrance, whatever else it had done had, changed the whole atmosphere of the room. Something blatant and irreverent had taken the place of earnest sincerity; refinement had for the moment given way to vulgarity.

Tamsin felt this keenly. So much so that, although it was yet early, she made no demur when Nick and Naomi asked her to tell their chauffeur to get out their car as it was time for them to return home.

"Thank you for asking us over, Tammy," said Naomi to her friend, as she bade her good night. "I wouldn't have missed coming for anything."

"Neither would I," added Nick. "David, old chap, when are you coming over to see us? It's a long time since you paid us a visit, and as you know, there is no man beneath the all-beholding sun that I would rather see at Mythamroyd than you. Couldn't you persuade Miss Rashleigh to come with you?" he added.

"Yes, do come, Tammy," urged Naomi. "It's months now since you have been to see us, and I am sure David would love to bring you over; wouldn't you, David?"

"If Miss Rashleigh will allow me——" replied David, but

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he did not complete the sentence. At that moment he caught the look on Dick Grimshaw's face, and the words he meant to speak were frozen on his lips.

This was no wonder, for if ever malevolence and devilry shone from a man's eyes, they shone from Grimshaw's at that moment.

"If ever I can be of service to Miss Rashleigh, I shall be only too honoured by her commands," he went on. "By the way, Nick, you will give me a lift as far as the park gates, won't you? It isn't far from there to the rectory."

"We will drive you to the rectory, my dear chap," replied his friend. "You must be terribly tired after such a service, and won't feel like walking."

"See that you take good care of him," interposed Grimshaw. "We can't afford for anything to happen to our latest curiosity. By the way, Godolphin, how does it feel to be thought a great man?"

David, without appearing to take any notice of the man's insolence, held out his hand to Tamsin. "We must finish our conversation another time, Miss Rashleigh," he said. "Meanwhile, let me thank you again for bringing my old friend here," and he gave an affectionate glance towards Nick.

"And what about me, David?" laughed Naomi. "You have not thanked her for bringing me here."

"Naomi," and the young rector seemed to forget himself for a moment. "If ever a man was thankful for a woman's friendship, I am thankful for yours. It is not often," he added, "that a man's pal is so lucky as mine is."

"This is really touching," sneered Grimshaw with a laugh, but the laughter of his voice was belied by the look in his eyes.

"What is that fellow doing here?" he asked, when Tamsin again returned to the room.

The girl made no reply for several seconds save to stand still and look at him with anger-lit eyes; evidently his words almost made her lose control over herself. "Such a question is, of

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course, pure insolence," she replied presently, "but since you seem interested, I may tell you that he was here at my invitation. Mr. and Mrs. Trebartha are, as you saw, friends of his, and as they were paying me a visit I naturally invited him here."

"In spite of my wishes?" and there was a sneer in his words.

"I have yet to learn what your wishes have to do with the matter," replied the girl icily.

For a moment, Grimshaw seemed on the point of blurting out an angry reply, but he controlled himself and seemed to be debating in his own mind as to what course he should take.

"Don't try me too far, Tammy," he said at length. "As you know, I am not a very patient man, and if you goad me to extremities I might become dangerous. Why has such a change come over you since that fellow came to the parish?"

"It would be interesting to know what you mean by such a question."

"You know what I mean well enough. You have not been the same girl since he came. Please don't think I am a fool," he went on surlily. "I felt there was a new atmosphere in this house when I came here on the day of his first visit. I didn't know then that you thought of appointing him as rector of the parish. All the same, I felt that something was wrong. I took an instinctive dislike to him too, and I tell you frankly I don't like the thought of his being here. You are not in love with him, are you?"

"In love with him! I never thought of such a thing."

Dick's face cleared in a moment, and the tone of his voice changed. "Then look here, Tammy, let's settle things up right away. As you know I have loved you for years and—it is the general talk of the town that we are engaged," he added with a nervous laugh.

"Then perhaps you will kindly contradict such an absurd rumour?"

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"I shall do nothing of the sort. Why should I when it is true?"

"It is not true," she replied. "I thought I had made it abundantly plain when last you spoke to me about it."

Grimshaw laughed again, and there was something menacing in his laughter. "As I said, don't goad me too far, Tammy, or I might become dangerous," he replied.

"But," cried the girl, and there was a look almost amounting to horror in her eyes, "you would not——"

"Not unless you make it necessary," he interrupted meaningfully. "As a business man I always keep letters very religiously, and I need scarcely tell you that I have guarded the letter you wrote to me months ago with every care. You wouldn't like that letter to become public property, would you?"

"But you would not dare! . . ."

"I would dare anything rather than lose you, Tammy," replied the young man. "Of course, no one shall ever know of it if you become my wife, but remember, I am not to be jilted. As I told you last night, I am a mad fool about you, and in spite of everything I trust you wholly. If I lost faith in you—I should lose faith in everything, and I shouldn't care a damn what I did. Forgive the language, Tammy, but I am desperate."

"Do you mean to say that you would make use of a silly girl's effusion?—an effusion written in jest?"

"Was it written in jest?" asked Dick, with a laugh. "That's got to be proved. Besides, what about that Scarborough episode?"

"The Scarborough episode!" cried the girl. "Why——"

"Yes, the Scarborough episode," repeated Dick. "Of course, it was quite innocent, but it would be jolly difficult to explain away, as I could relate it. Not that I should ever think of making use of it," he went on, "unless you drive me to madness; but remember, I am not to be trifled with, Tammy. Of course," he laughed, "girls are allowed a great

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deal of rope in these days, and they do things which, from what I can gather, our mothers and grandmothers would never dream of doing. All the same, if it were known that Miss Tamsin Rashleigh, the owner of Wentworth Hall and the bearer of an old name which goes far back into history—but there, I won't conclude the sentence, and perhaps it was wrong of me to mention such things at all; still as I have told you, I am desperate, and a desperate man will do unheard-of things. More than that, you have treated me in a cavalier fashion these last few months, and I won't stand it. I love you as I have never loved another girl, and more than that I mean to have you. No, don't squirm, I mean what I say. We Grimshaws have a name for getting what we want, and I mean to get what I want."

During the whole of this conversation they had been standing a few feet apart facing each other, and an observant onlooker would have said that in spite of the defiance of each, a look of fear as well as of determination shone from their eyes. It was true there seemed no hesitancy in Dick Grimshaw's demeanour. He was, from a physical standpoint, the typical Yorkshireman. Sturdy, thick-set, strong, with an almost bulldog-like appearance, anyone would have declared him to be a man hard to beat. The girl who stood before him was different. A young Oxford graduate had described her, after visiting Wentworth Hall before her father died, as a "thoroughbred"; and his description was not altogether inapt. She was the daughter of a proud race, or it might be more truthfully said of two proud races—the Rashleighs and the Wentworths, both of whom could trace their family tree back into the dim past. Tamsin, lithe and almost slenderly built, seemed to be made of steel wire. Her every movement was quick and decided; her features, while finely and delicately chiselled, nevertheless spoke of firmness and resolution; while her dark flashing eyes told of a pride of race, as well as of a will power which would not be denied.

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For some time there was silence between them, then Grimshaw spoke again. "What is the use of our quarrelling?" he asked. "I love you as I have never loved another girl, and although you may be in a curious humour to-night, you can't deny that you like me. Let me announce our engagement right away, and let's be happy."

"Will you kindly leave me?" she said presently.

"Not until you tell me what I have come here to know," he replied.

"Please don't compel me to ring for a servant to show you out," and Dick, stubborn as he was, quailed before the look in her eyes.

"If you do," retorted Dick, between his set teeth, "I will tell that same servant about that letter. Ah, that makes you squirm, doesn't it? Yes, and I will do more than that. I will give the handsome young rector of Gildershaw an account of the Scarborough episode. By God, I will!"

For a moment the girl seemed to stagger as though he had struck her; then pride came to her aid. Going straight to the bell push she pressed it. "Do what you threaten," she cried. "Tell my servants all you want to tell them. Go to the rectory and tell your miserable tale!"

She stood erect before him as she spoke, her eyes flashing a defiant look.

Perhaps Dick had not meant what he said when he made his threat, perhaps too, the remembrance came to him that while his own grandfather worked as a weaver in a humble cottage near Gildershaw, Tamsin's grandfather was the Squire of Wentworth Hall. Be that as it may, a new light came into his eyes, a new tone into his voice. "No, Tammy," he said. "I would rather die than give you pain. All the same, I shall never give up loving you, never renounce my determination to win you, and before six months are over you will be my wife."

Then as a servant answered her call, he held out his hand to

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her. "Good night, Miss Rashleigh," he said, "and thank you for regarding my suggestions so kindly."

He followed the servant into the hall as he spoke, and a minute later Tamsin heard the wheels of his car pass down the drive.

"Do you require anything more to-night, Miss ?" asked the servant.

"Nothing, Evans, thank you."

"Good night, Miss."

"Good night."

After that, Tamsin Rashleigh sat for a long time alone, thinking. Sometimes rage shone from her eyes, sometimes a look of wonder and awe ; while more than once an onlooker would have seen an expression of tenderness, and now and again a smile passed over her lips.

CHAPTER XIX

CRITICISM

FOR several Sunday nights following the one we have described, the Gildershaw Parish Church was crowded to the doors. Perhaps there seemed no sufficient reason for this, yet so it was. David had announced that he intended preaching a series of sermons on who and what Jesus actually was, what he actually taught, and what Christianity actually meant to the life of the world ; as a consequence the people, whose interest had evidently been aroused by his previous deliverances, came in crowds.

There were several factors which helped to account for this. One was that he was transparently honest ; the people were assured that he would not utter one word of the truth of which he was not absolutely convinced. For another thing he was tremendously in earnest, but his earnestness was the earnestness of sanity and not of fanaticism. As we have before hinted, David had worked hard and studied hard during the months he had been in Gildershaw. There was scarcely a book of outstanding importance on Biblical criticism which he had not read, and to which he had not brought a mind eager for a knowledge of the truth, and although not a thinker of the first order, or a scholar as the term is usually accepted, he nevertheless had a vigorous and well balanced mind ; and having read hard for his history honours degree at Oxford, he was in a position to appreciate the best thought of our time. More than that, he discovered as the weeks passed by that he was able to express his thoughts in clear, vigorous, and yet simple

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language. Thus the hard-headed Yorkshire people who are not slow in valuing transparent honesty, and who love outspoken preaching, came Sunday by Sunday with increased interest.

But there was something above and beyond all this. The people realized that he did not speak to them about a mythical Christ, or a traditional Christ ; but of one whom he actually knew, and of Whose presence he was conscious every day. More than that, he troubled little or nothing about Churches or ecclesiasticism of any sort, he simply tried to make them see what Jesus actually taught, and what His teaching meant to the life of the world.

As was almost natural, he soon became regarded as what was called heterodox, and as a consequence, while the people became more and more interested, he aroused a great deal of opposition among old-fashioned Church people. They were simply astounded when he showed how many of the Church ceremonials and beliefs had been taken from the usages and faiths of the pagan world ; and they were more than ever staggered when he relegated what he called the non-essentials of Christianity to their proper place.

Of course, his sermons caused a tremendous amount of discussion in the town, and before long he found himself flooded with letters, sent to him especially by young men who had given up all interest and all faith in orthodox Christianity. Naturally too, he answered those letters, not with the desire to shine as a dialectician, but with a fervent desire to get at the actual truth. Before long, too, the rectory, which for many years had been in a way regarded as sacrosanct, and seldom visited by the rank and file of the people, became invaded especially by young people who wanted to talk with the rector about things which they had practically discarded. Many of them had been taught to believe in an infallible Bible, and when they learnt that the Bible was not infallible in the way they had thought, had ceased to pay attention to it at all.

Others had stumbled at what they had been taught about miracles, while others still regarded the Christian faith lightly because it seemed out of accord with the accepted discoveries of science.

Probably many of these questions and so called difficulties sprung from the desire to appear clever, rather than from a yearning to discover truth, but David met all his objectors in the spirit of absolute sincerity. Remembering his own mental wanderings, and calling to mind the doubts which had seemed to make faith almost impossible, he was always sympathetic and patient.

But this was not all. He had, as we have said, rediscovered Christ. He was conscious of Him. He was as sure of His presence as he was sure of the presence of those with whom he daily came into contact. Thus when he spoke of Christ he did not speak of One who was afar off, but of One who was actually present in the lives of men.

As we have before stated, Gildershaw was fast drifting to paganism. Possibly, probably, it was no worse and no better than thousands of towns all over the land; nevertheless, the place was seething with vice. Young men and women, the foundations of whose faith had been undermined by the materialism of the age, saw no reason why they should struggle against temptation, and were drifting with the tide. And David, not in any theoretical way, but from actual experience, showed how the presence of Christ was a power at the command of all whereby evil could be resisted. He showed too that Christ was a great dynamic moving men to higher thoughts and holier conceptions.

Be that as it may, religion was no longer a dead letter in the town. That conversation in the rectory between himself and the other ministers in the town had borne fruits. More than one of them, the Rev. Douglas McPhail in particular, as well as one of the Methodist ministers, had been impressed even as David had been impressed, and as a consequence,

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there was a new note in their preaching, a note which had its effect among the people generally. Some of the Churches which had been well nigh empty, became fuller and fuller as the weeks went by, while a new spirit pervaded the life of the community.

Not that there was any revival according to the old-fashioned sense of the word. There was no talk about conversions, and penitent forms, as was remembered by the older section of the community; nevertheless, thousands realized a meaning in life which they had never realized before.

But there were many who criticized, and criticized severely. Many indeed spoke of David in no very flattering terms and accused him of being an enemy to Christianity. Among those who condemned him most severely, were those who belonged to the circle of which the Grimshaw family formed the centre. They professed to be shocked at the disturbing influences which David had brought into their midst, and declared that it would be good for the town if the young rector were driven out of it.

"The Parish Church might be a dissenting chapel," Dick Grimshaw said more than once. "Fancy the Gildershaw pulpit being used as a platform for the discussion of things that were settled centuries ago. We were a happy, contented people before this young whipper-snapper came, while now the parish Church is no longer the home of dignified services and orderly sermons, but a kind of hustling, where the man whose only aim is to get popularity spouts his windy heresies."

During the whole of this time David had never heard one word from Tamsin Rashleigh. He had not been to the Hall, neither had he been invited there. He had heard that she had attended more than one of the services at the Church, but in the immense crowds which had gathered he had not seen her.

Neither did he know whether she had any sympathy with the attitude he had taken, and remembering what she had told him on the Sunday night we described in the last chapter,

he imagined that she had little or no faith in what he said or did.

Then came a bomb-shell.

One morning while David was sitting at breakfast, the servant brought in his morning letters, among which was one that he saw at a glance came from the bishop's palace.

It was not a long letter, neither was it typewritten as most of the bishop's letters were. It was simply a note in his lordship's own hand-writing stating that as certain representations had been made concerning him, David, he was obliged to ask him to come to see him, the bishop, without delay. It was true the letter concluded with kindly greetings and what almost amounted to the Episcopal blessing, but the young rector could not help realizing that the epistle portended trouble.

"Is that letter from the palace, David?" asked Mrs. Godolphin, who watched her son keenly as he read.

"Yes," replied David, who proceeded quietly to open his other letters.

"What does the bishop say?"

"Nothing that would give you very much pleasure, mother, I am afraid. Would you like to read it?" and David passed it to her without a word.

Mrs. Godolphin had not yet decided whether to be pleased or angry because of the activities at the parish Church. It was true that, old-fashioned Churchwoman as she was, she would have preferred that David should have conducted the services on the old safe lines; and although she had been chagrined in the old days at the meagre congregations which had gathered, she wanted to see them increased rather because her son was a Godolphin, who because of his family associations might well be in the running for a Canonry or even a Deanery, than by any special interest in David's sermons. On the other hand, however, she could not help being gratified by the new and tremendous interest that had gathered

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around the Parish Church and its rector. She saw that she had become a person of increased importance through her son's popularity, and as she watched the great crowds of people enter the pews, she could not help feeling pleased.

"I don't like it," she had said more than once to herself as she watched the eager listening congregations, "all the same, the boy is doubtless a wonderful power in the town."

As she read the letter and understood its import she became angry. "Of course I know what it means," the old lady cried indignantly. "It is that Grimshaw family. For some reason or other they have taken a dislike to you. I have heard it talked about in the town for weeks. How dare they?"

"Yorkshire people dare to do a great deal, mother," replied David with a laugh.

"Can the bishop do anything to you, David?" asked the old lady eagerly. "It is said in the town that the Grimshaws mean to drive you out of the parish. Do you think that they can persuade the bishop to do it?"

"I dare say they can make things uncomfortable for me," replied David, "but I am not bothered."

"I am afraid I don't understand much about the Church's laws in these days," went on the old lady; "but wasn't an Enabling Bill passed in Parliament some time ago which gives the bishops a lot of power?"

"I am afraid I haven't troubled much about it," replied David; "but I imagine he would find it very difficult to drive me out of the parish, even if he wanted to."

"I should think so indeed!" retorted the old lady. "Fancy the rector of a parish being turned out! All the same, I must say I think you have been very foolish. You have been unorthodox too. I don't profess to know much about the Church's doctrines, but your preaching has not been the preaching I have been accustomed to all my life. I dare say too that a garbled account of things has been sent to the bishop, and I am sure that the Grimshaws will move heaven

and earth to do you harm. I thought when you came here first that they were jealous of you, and didn't like you as a consequence ; but it can't be that."

"Jealous ?" questioned David.

"Yes, jealous. Oh, I have kept my ears and eyes open. The Grimshaws are nothing but parvenus, upstarts ; they would give their eyes to become associated with Wentworth Hall."

"Well, aren't they ?" asked David.

"No," replied the old lady decidedly. "That girl Rashleigh, silly as she may be, has never invited the family to the Hall since we have been here. I know that young Grimshaw goes there sometimes, and I have been angry with that girl for allowing it ; but it can't mean anything."

"What can't mean anything?"

"Those stories about her engagement to young Grimshaw." David was silent. "I used to think," she went on, "that he was jealous of you for going there, but as you haven't been since you started preaching those outrageous sermons, it can't be that."

Still David was silent.

"Of course you must go. This letter is as good as a command, and you can't disobey."

"I don't intend to. I shall catch the 10 o'clock train."

"What, this morning ?"

"Certainly. It is always best to meet such requests as these without delay."

David reached the cathedral town a little before eleven o'clock, and a few minutes later was admitted into the bishop's palace.

"Well, Godolphin," the bishop remarked after the ordinary greetings were over. "I was awfully sorry to be obliged to send for you, but in the circumstances I could not do otherwise. You see," he went on, "it is not as though the charges preferred against you were vague and ambiguous ; they are very definite, and very important."

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“Charges?” repeated David.

“Yes, charges. For that matter they have come to me in many ways. I have here at least a dozen letters of which I took no notice beyond acknowledging them through my secretary, but when a petition came signed by many influential parishioners I was obliged to send for you.”

“A petition?” queried David in a tone of astonishment.

“Here it is,” replied his lordship. “The charges against you are set forth in carefully prepared language, and an appeal has been made to me to ask you to resign the living.”

“Of course it is due to me,” urged the young rector, “to be informed what these charges are, and who have preferred them.”

The bishop was silent for a few seconds. He was a sagacious old man, and was anxious if possible to avoid saying anything which might be quoted against him later.

“Of course I will tell you what the charges against you are,” he replied; “that is right and just; but as to who preferred them, and who have signed the petition I prefer for the present to be silent. Of course,” he went on, “I have read the *Gildershaw* newspaper week by week, in which your sayings and doings have been fully reported.”

“What I have said I have said openly,” David replied, “and I confess I do not enjoy answering anonymous accusations.”

“There is nothing anonymous about the accusations,” the bishop asserted. “Only, in view of possible developments, it might be wise not to mention names at this stage. Enough to say that the charges made against you are by responsible and well-known people.”

“Will you allow me to read this precious document?” asked David, nodding towards the papers which the bishop held in his hand.

“There is no need for that at present,” replied the other. “Possibly the whole thing will have to come to light soon, although I hope not; it will all depend on you.”

Of course David had a pretty good idea from whom the document came, and was perhaps a little irritated as a consequence. He reflected that the sermons he had preached in Gildershaw Church, and which he supposed were the cause of his being sent for that morning, were not the result of a passing whim of his own, but as it seemed to him of a great, vital need. He was prepared therefore, to stand by what he had said, let the consequences be what they might.

"At any rate, my lord," he said a little warmly, "I have a right to hear in detail the reasons why your lordship has been asked to request my resignation. Is there anything against my personal character?"

"Oh no," replied the bishop hastily. "Nothing of the sort."

"Am I accused then of neglecting my duties?"

"Not of neglecting them certainly."

"Of what am I accused then?"

The bishop gave the young Cornishman a quick glance before replying, and saw by his firmly-compressed lips, his square determined-looking jaw, and his bright flashing eyes, that he had no weakling to deal with.

"I am anxious as far as I can to avoid unpleasantness," he replied; "naturally, however, I have to think of the welfare of the parish, and I am anxious that nothing shall be said or done to jeopardize your future."

"My future be hanged!" cried David impatiently. "I beg your pardon, my lord, I mean no discourtesy, but if I read your mind correctly what you have to say to me is important. At least let me know what it is."

"Come, come, Godolphin," and the bishop tried to appear at ease; "let us try to deal with this matter with as little heat as possible."

David was silent.

"The charges which are preferred against you," the bishop went on turning over the pages of the petition a little un-

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easily, "seem to fall under two heads. First general, and second, ecclesiastical and theological."

After this followed a long conversation during which the bishop sat for the certain charge preferred against the rector, who defended himself by describing the experiences we have recorded.

For some time the prelate seemed undecided how to act, but presently he appeared to make up his mind.

CHAPTER XX

DICK GRIMSHAW'S THREAT

“**T**HIS petition,” the bishop declared presently, “was drawn up and signed by some of the most influential people in Gildershaw.”

David waited in silence.

“I cannot ignore that fact,” went on the prelate.

“Neither can you ignore the fact that whereas the Church was nearly empty, it is now crowded to the doors,” David urged. “Neither can you ignore the fact that whereas religion was almost a dead letter in the town, it has now become a matter of vital importance.”

“I am a much older man than you,” the bishop replied, “and as a consequence have learnt to regard with disfavour anything like freakism in connexion with the Christian faith. The Church has more than once been unsettled by beliefs which have caught the passing fancy of the thoughtless ; but we pay but little attention to these things. Fads come and fads go, but the Catholic Church still abides. The doctrines of the Church have stood the test of two thousand years, and they will remain when the fantasies of excitable young men are forgotten. You are not the first man, Godolphin, who has had a passing popularity, but a popularity which has been as ephemeral as the mist of a June morning. I have to deal with facts, hard incontrovertible facts. I am faced with a difficulty, a serious difficulty. You have alienated a large number of faithful people in your parish. They do not believe in you ; they will not listen to you. Remember this,” and the

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voice of the bishop took on a stern tone, "the Church does not exist for the sake of the clergy, but the clergy do exist to proclaim the doctrines of the Church. I am persuaded to ask you to resign, and honestly I think it would be for the good of your parish if you did resign. Mark you, I do not say that you are not sincere; for that matter I'll admit that you believe what you have told me; but I have learnt from long experience that it is a bad thing for a parish, when the parish priest is out of sympathy with his bishop. Moreover, it is no light matter for a young rector to antagonize the feelings of the most influential part of his parish."

"I suppose you mean that you desire me to resign?"

"I don't think I need to speak more plainly," replied the bishop.

"I am perfectly willing to take a plebiscite of the parish," replied David. "As you have rightly said, a clergyman who has lost the faith of his people can do little or no good; but I see no proof that my people have lost faith in me."

"I do not believe in plebiscites," replied the bishop. "Neither are they according to the usages of our Church. We are a State Church; remember that, young man, and you have come to work in a diocese over which I am bishop. Moreover, it is your duty as a parish priest to be faithful to the usages and doctrines which are set forth in the Prayer Book."

"I am aware of that," replied David, "and I have always tried to be true to my ordination vows. I am not one of those," he could not help adding, "who having taken the ordination vows of the Protestant Reformed Church of England, who are trying to bring back the paganism which existed in the pre-reformation days."

"You are determined then, to go on—in the same way?"

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"I cannot help myself," replied David. "As a minister of Jesus Christ I must proclaim His teachings."

"It comes to this then," said the bishop, "you refuse to obey those set in authority over you."

"In what way have I refused to obey those set in authority over me?" asked the young man.

"You do not appear to understand," retorted the bishop. "In this petition which I hold in my hand you are accused of antagonizing many of the most influential people in your parish, and of creating dissensions everywhere. This to me is very serious, and I am obliged to take notice of it. I do not want to take any harsh steps, I remember that you are an inexperienced young man, and that this is the first parish of which you have been placed at the head. Come now, is it not better to be reasonable? Would it not be wiser for you to leave Gildershaw, and go to some other sphere of labour where your work would be more appreciated? I do not say you have not very considerable abilities; doubtless you have; and it is possible that in some dioceses you might do useful work; but in Gildershaw——"

"The Church which had been neglected for years is now crowded to the doors every Sunday," David could not help retorting. "Am I to neglect that?"

"I take but little account of that," replied the bishop. "What was true of the Athenians in the days of St. Paul is true now. There are always a number of people who are attracted by some new thing. What I have to think about is the *permanent* good of the parish, and I cannot allow any priest, whoever he may be, to offend, to antagonize, and to drive away the most loyal supporters, and the most generous givers to the causes we all have at heart, from their own Church."

"How often were these people seen in Church before I came?" David could not help asking.

"That is not the question at issue. Come now, Godolphin,

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be reasonable. Would it not be wise for you to leave a parish where the most influential people, including the patroness, is against you."

"Is the patroness against me?" David could not help asking. "Did she sign that petition?"

"As I told you, I do not intend at present to disclose the names of those who are responsible for it," replied the bishop; "but you can take my word for it that they are the most influential of your parishioners."

"And is—the patroness one of them?" David persisted. The bishop was silent.

"I think I have a right to insist on asking that," he repeated.

"And if she is?"

"I must carefully consider my whereabouts. It was through her I came into the parish, and if it is her wish that I should leave, I think I had better go; but I would like to be sure."

The bishop turned to the petition, and again examined it. "I certainly do not see her name here," he replied, "but I am assured that your resignation would be acceptable to her."

David looked at his diary, and seemed to be in deep thought. "I must see her as soon as possible," he said, like one thinking aloud. "I cannot go to the Hall to-day, but to-morrow—yes, to-morrow I can manage it."

He left the prelate shortly afterwards, and made his way back to Gildershaw like a man in a dream.

* * * *

That same night Tamsin Rashleigh sat alone in Wentworth Hall, and she seemed more than a little perturbed. More than once she scanned the letter which had been brought to her by a special messenger that night, and appeared to be pondering deeply over its contents.

"Dear Tamsin," (it ran) "It is most important for me to see you to-night, and your butler having informed me by telephone

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that you were dining at home, and that you are not going out afterwards, I am sending you this to confirm what I asked your butler to tell you, that I should be over shortly after nine o'clock. As I said, it is very important that I should see you, so please don't disappoint me.

Yours,
Dick."

Then, as if to make a mistake impossible, the full signature was given.

RICHARD BRAYSHAW GRIMSHAW.

As we have said, Tamsin had scanned this letter more than once, not only during dinner, but since she had retired to the drawing room, and she seemed not a little perturbed. "What can he want to see me about so particularly?" she asked herself again and again, and she cast her mind back over the events of the last few weeks as if to find an answer to her question.

Tamsin felt very lonely. Usually she kept the house full of visitors, and it was rarely that she dined alone; but to-night no one had appeared. The house, too, was very silent, and situated as it was, far away from other dwellings, she seemed to be cut off from the rest of the world.

Presently she gave a start. She heard the sound of a motor coming up the drive, and although there was no reason why she should be excited, her every nerve became tense, and a feeling of dread possessed her.

"Mr. Grimshaw, please, Miss Rashleigh," a servant announced as the door opened.

Dick came towards her with outstretched hand. "Good," he exclaimed. "This is the first time for weeks I have caught you alone. You haven't got anybody here, have you?"

"As you see, I am alone," replied the girl. "Why do you wish to see me?"

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"I always want to see you," replied Dick trying to appear at ease; "you know that very well."

"But you haven't come to tell me that?" and the girl spoke lightly. "What is this thing of tremendous importance that you want to speak to me about?"

"Look here, Tammy," he began. "I want to know this first of all. Why have you persistently avoided me during these last few months? And why is it when I have proposed coming to see you that you have always tried to put me off?"

"Surely you haven't come here to-night to ask that?"

"Yes I have; that, and other things. Look here Tammy, I am in a desperate mood, and I want things settled up."

He took out his pocket-book as he spoke, and extracted from it a slip of paper. "I want your permission to send that to *The Times*," he went on. "Read it, will you?"

Tamsin had overcome her excitement by this time, and took the slip of paper from him with a steady hand.

"A marriage has been arranged between Richard Brayshaw Grimshaw, Jr., only son of Richard Grimshaw of Gildershaw Towers, and Miss Tamsin Wentworth Rashleigh of Wentworth Hall." She read so far, and then stopped.

"What does this mean?" she asked.

"I want to send that to *The Times* first thing to-morrow," he announced. "May I?"

"Certainly not," replied the girl.

"Why?"

"Because I do not wish it; because it will not be true."

"But it *will* be true," he replied grimly. "Come, let us have no more dilly-dallying; you know I have loved you for years, and that no other girl is of any account when you are around. You know too that it is believed in the town that we're engaged.—For that matter we *are* engaged; you know that as well as I do."

A strange light flashed from her eyes, and her lips became firmly compressed, but she did not speak.

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"I ask again for your permission to send this to *The Times*, Tammy."

"I refuse it," she replied.

"Then I shall send it without your permission."

She gave a quick glance at him as he spoke, and saw by the light in his eyes that he meant what he said.

"I must congratulate you on your method of wooing," and she forced a laugh as she spoke.

"Never mind about my method of wooing," replied Dick. "I mean what I say. I am going to send this to *The Times* to-morrow, and it will appear next Monday or Tuesday."

"Of course I can't hinder you from sending it," she replied, "but if it does appear I shall write contradicting it."

"You mean that?"

"I certainly do."

Dick seemed on the point of bursting out with an angry threat, but controlled himself.

"What is the meaning of this change in you?" he asked angrily. "Have you become religious? Surely you are not such a muff as that? I heard of your being at Church several times lately, but you don't believe in Godolphin's tomfoolery, do you?"

"I wish I did," replied the girl.

"Did what?"

"Believe what Mr. Godolphin believes; but I don't, worse luck."

"Are you in love with Godolphin?" Dick asked after a long silence. "I have a right to ask that anyhow."

"Your impertinence is almost beyond forgiveness," replied the girl. "All the same, I will answer you. I am not in love with him, and your question is not only impertinent but ridiculous."

"I hate him," and Dick uttered the words savagely.

"Why should you hate him? He seems harmless enough."

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"Harmless!" cried Dick. "You are a different girl since he came."

"How am I different?"

"You are different to me. You have changed altogether. Anyhow, he is leaving."

"Leaving! I don't understand."

"He is leaving Gildershaw. Many of the best people in the parish have been so outraged by his actions during the past few weeks that a petition has been sent to the bishop asking him to demand his resignation. Look here, Tammy, you say you do not believe in the nonsense he preaches. You are not anxious for him to stay, are you?"

"Anxious for him to stay? It is a matter of utter indifference to me."

"Then if the bishop comes to see you, and consults you about the trouble he has been making in the parish——"

"I did not know he was making trouble," interrupted the girl.

"When a man drives some of the best families in the parish out of the Church I call that trouble," replied Dick. "Anyhow, if the bishop takes steps to remove him you won't oppose him, will you? You see, you are the patroness of the living, and your word will go a long way."

"And if I do?" cried the girl.

"I would rather not threaten," said the young manufacturer, after a long silence, "but mind, Tammy, I hold you in the hollow of my hand. I told you when I came to-night that I was in a desperate mood. I am. All the same, I want to be reasonable with you, if I can. I asked you whether you would consent to my sending that announcement to *The Times*, and you refused; now I ask you something else. It is that, if the bishop takes steps to remove Godolphin from the parish, you will support him."

"And if I refuse?" asked the girl quietly.

"If you refuse," replied Dick, and his voice shook as he

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spoke ; " as surely as there is a God above, that letter which you sent to me, and which we discussed the last time I was here, shall appear word for word in the *Gildershaw Gazette* ; and more than that, a full account of the Scarborough episode shall also appear."

Tamsin Rashleigh's face became as white as paper ; doubtless his threat had frightened her. " You daren't do it," she replied. " The editor of the paper would not dare to publish it."

Grimshaw laughed raucously. " Wouldn't he ? " he replied. " Dixon knows on which side his bread is buttered. Why," and there was a snarl of triumph in his voice, " Dixon's bread and butter depends on me. He is my tool, my chattel. More than that, the *Gildershaw Gazette* is my property ; I own it ; and whatever I say shall appear, will appear. Good night, Tammy. That is all I have to say now ; but I mean every word, mind that ; every word."

He hesitated a few seconds, as if debating whether he should say more, then he turned on his heel and left the room.

CHAPTER XXI

TAMSIN AND THE BISHOP

AFTER Dick Grimshaw had left her, Tamsin Rashleigh sat for a long time alone, thinking. Almost for the first time since she had grown to womanhood she was afraid, and she was afraid of the man who had just visited her.

It may seem strange that a girl of Tamsin's upbringing should have allowed herself to become entangled in such a way that Dick was able to threaten her. The Rashleighs might rightly claim to be patricians, while the grandfather of Dick Grimshaw had, in his younger days, worn clogs. The Rashleighs had, for many generations, been known as aristocrats, while the Grimshaws, in spite of their wealth, were looked upon as parvenus and plebeians. Thus for a man of Dick's order not only to visit Wentworth Hall, but to be looked on as Tamsin Rashleigh's probable husband, was a matter of surprise to many.

If she had been poor the explanation would have been easy. More than one of the old Yorkshire and Lancashire families had married into the families of the wealthy manufacturing classes in order to save their estates ; but there was no need of this as far as Tamsin was concerned. She not only bore the oldest name in the district, but was known to possess a considerable fortune. Of course, if she loved Dick there was nothing more to be said, but those who knew her best could not believe that this was the case.

A word of explanation at this juncture, therefore, may be necessary.

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It will be remembered that Tamsin's father had died only a year or so before this story opens, and that the girl, only a little more than twenty years of age, was left not only with a big estate to manage, but her life to live. More than that she was without experience, and without a controlling hand to guide her. Indeed, Tamsin would have resented a controlling hand.

Her father had been somewhat of a recluse, and though the girl loved him dearly she saw very little of him. From fourteen to eighteen she had been at a large public school in Scotland, and on finally returning home had been allowed to do pretty much as she liked.

As we have said, Mr. Rashleigh's disposition was a very retiring one. He had but few close relations in that part of the country, and callers at the house were not frequent. Thus when he died, Tamsin was left practically alone, and while during her school days she had formed many friendships, there was practically no-one to whom she could turn for advice.

But this was not all. Tamsin was a child of the age in which she lived, and had eagerly imbibed the current notions of the times. Religion she had practically discarded, and as we have seen, looked upon Churches as effete institutions. Being a voracious reader moreover, she had imbibed the ideas of many of our modern novelists, and as a consequence had prided herself on having shaken off the shackles which bound women of the Victorian era.

Indeed, Tamsin was a great deal of a rebel, and while she hated anything like coarseness, she rejoiced in her freedom, and determined, as she termed it, to live her own life. Added to this she professed to despise anything like caste, or snobbery. As far as she could judge, the homes of the old county families that she had visited were the dullest places on earth, and she was led to believe that the people of her own order were insufferable bores.

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It will be seen, therefore, that from eighteen to twenty-three years of age, Tamsin Rashleigh was passing through a dangerous period of her existence. She was caught in the whirlpool of the confused thoughts of the time, and being under no restraint she might easily have wrecked her life.

It was at this time that she became acquainted with Dick Grimshaw. During her school days he was an entire stranger to her. Old Mr. Rashleigh, the proud aristocrat, would no more have thought of being on visiting terms with the Grimshaws than he would have thought of inviting his chauffeur to dine with him. But with Tamsin it was different. She was young, impetuous, romantic, and in many ways foolish, and she accepted Dick's ardent admiration without attaching any particular importance to it.

But here lay danger. Dick, fascinated by the idea of winning Tamsin as his wife, and encouraged by his family to translate his hopes into reality, began to make plans with this end in view. He dreamed of the time when he would be master of the proud home of the Rashleighs, and the husband of the present owner. For a time, too, he seemed to be successful. It was true Tamsin had not asked any of the Grimshaw family to Wentworth, but she had on two occasions accepted invitations to Dick's home, a flamboyant-looking building, which bore the proud name of Gildershaw Towers. Moreover, she and Dick had been seen a great deal together, and as a consequence, gossiping tongues had wagged. It is true that whenever Dick had approached being amorous with her she had resented it with anger, nevertheless, the young Yorkshireman, who had frequently boasted that the Grimshaws always got what they wanted in the long run, never gave up hope.

This led to what Dick had referred to as the Scarborough episode, and to the letter which he threatened to publish in the *Gildershaw Gazette*. Both were innocent enough, foolish as they doubtless were; but when interpreted by the gossips

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of a country town, could be made to appear extremely unpleasant.

They happened in this way. Some time before David Godolphin came to Gildershaw, Dick had invited Tamsin to join a party of young people for a picnic on the Yorkshire moors. She was in a mad, reckless mood or she would never have accepted. Nevertheless, when the day came she had not only taken her place in Dick's car, and driven with him to a lonely spot where the picnic was held, but, as many of the young people who were present declared, had flirted with him outrageously. But that was not all. Early in the evening she and Dick had left the others, and driven to Scarborough, where she had dined with him alone at one of the hotels. While they were there, Dick, emboldened by the more than usual quantity of wine he had drunk, had, in the presence of the proprietress of the hotel who happened to come into the room, introduced Tamsin to her as his wife.

"Why shouldn't I have a wife?" protested Dick, when he saw the look on her face.

"But you are not married," she asserted.

"Yes, we are," declared Dick. "We were married in secret, and we are spending our honeymoon here in Scarborough."

"Where are you staying?" asked the lady.

"At the Oriental," was the reply.

"That isn't true, is it?" and she turned towards Tamsin.

What possessed her I do not pretend to know, but on that day she thought nothing of consequences.

"Why shouldn't it be true?" she asked saucily, and shortly afterwards left the hotel with her hand upon Dick's arm. That night they went to one of the Scarborough theatres together, and as Scarborough was a great many miles from Gildershaw, Tamsin did not arrive at Wentworth Hall until the early hours of the morning.

As we have said, the incident itself was innocent enough, but Dick determined to make the most of it, and on the following

day wrote a letter to Tamsin in which he referred to their dinner at the hotel, and signed himself "Your loving husband, Dick."

Tamsin never forgave herself for what followed. Still under the influence of the mood which had possessed her the previous day, she wrote him a letter which might bear interpretations which she never dreamt of meaning.

Of course, the whole episode was innocent of everything except the exuberant madness of a high-spirited girl acting under the influence of excitement; but Dick guarded the letter with every care. He had determined to win Tamsin as his wife, and as he read it and re-read it, he thought he saw in it the means of forcing her to do his will. As for Tamsin, no sooner had she sent the letter than she regretted her foolishness. It was true it was only the effusion of a silly girl, nevertheless she felt she had made herself common by yielding to a passing desire for excitement. She felt, moreover, that she had acted more than foolishly by being associated with Dick Grimshaw at all. He and she lived in different worlds, and into her heart came a kind of loathing for her own thoughtlessness.

Nevertheless, as she sat alone after he had gone that night, she felt that she had given him reason for his anger. She *had* flirted with him. She had given the gossips of the town reason for believing that she would marry him. She saw too as she reflected on the letter she had written, that, interpreted by evil minds, it was terribly compromising.

But what was at the back of it all? She knew that Dick wanted to marry her. He had pleaded with her again and again to give him her promise. He had even followed her to France where she went to visit some friends, and had there pleaded with her. But was that the reason of his visit that night? She remembered the day when David Godolphin had first visited Wentworth Hall. He had come there with Nick Trebartha and Naomi in order to decide whether he should

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accept her offer of the Gildershaw living. She remembered too that Dick Grimshaw had come that same afternoon. Why had she allowed Grimshaw, who was a pushing, coarse, young man, to visit her as her equal? Why had she allowed him to call her "Tammy"? He had in their presence invited her to his home on the following Sunday afternoon, and had assumed a sort of proprietary attitude when talking to her.

Again she reflected on Dick's visit there that evening. Why had he come? Why was he so anxious that David Godolphin should leave the parish? Why did he hate him so?

But she would think no more about it. After all, in spite of the fact that the poles lay between the Rector and the manufacturer, the former was nothing to her nor ever could be.

Next morning just as she was finishing breakfast, a servant came into the room informing her that the bishop desired to speak to her on the telephone.

"Who did you say?" she asked wonderingly.

"The bishop, Miss Rashleigh."

"Good morning," she heard someone say as she held the receiver to her ear. "Please excuse me for ringing you up so early, but it is rather important. Will you be at home this afternoon?"

"As far as I know I shall."

"May I come over and have a cup of tea with you?"

"I shall be only too delighted if you will."

"Splendid. Then may I roll up about four o'clock?"

"Right. I shall expect you."

"Thank you very much. Oh, by the way, you will be alone, won't you? You see, I want our conversation to be private."

A minute later Tamsin was in the room where she conducted most of her business. Indeed, it was called the "business room." It was here she received her steward, her agents, and her managers.

But she did not touch the heap of letters that lay before her.

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She was thinking of the bishop's visit, and what it portended. Then she remembered her conversation with Dick Grimshaw on the previous night: "If the bishop takes steps to remove Godolphin from the parish, you will support him?" was the request he had made. "And if I refuse?" she had asked. "If you refuse," Dick had replied, "as surely as there is a God above us, that letter which we discussed the last time I was here shall appear word for word in the *Gildershaw Gazette*. More than that, a full account of the Scarborough episode shall also appear."

And he had meant what he said. She was sure of that. She knew Dick Grimshaw well enough to understand the steely glitter in his eyes, and the expression on his determined Yorkshire face.

For a long time she sat thinking, and trying to understand the position. Then suddenly a strange light came into her eyes, and her lips quivered as though a new force had entered her life.

Just before four o'clock the bishop's motor arrived at the door.

"This is just lovely," cried the girl, who was there to meet him. "It is not often that you visit Wentworth Hall."

"It is not often that I pay visits at all," replied the old prelate. "I don't expect you understand, my dear, but there is such an amount of routine work in a bishop's life that he has very little time for social intercourse."

"Well I am glad to see you, anyhow. Will you come this way?" and she led him to a room where tea was prepared.

"My word, young lady," exclaimed the bishop as he looked out of the window across the wide-spreading park and the flower gardens, "the lines have fallen to you in pleasant places."

"Who was the original author of the statement that things are not what they seem?" asked the girl. "Anyhow, although the words are trite, they are very true."

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"You don't look happy, my child," the bishop said as he looked into Tamsin's face. "Is anything the matter?"

"I was wondering what you wanted to see me about," she evaded. "I know very well that a busy man like you would not come to see a silly girl like me without reason."

"Why do you call yourself silly?" he asked.

"I suppose all girls are silly sometimes," she replied.

"Ah, you have lived long enough to understand that, have you?" and the bishop toyed with the tea cup in his hand. Then he looked at her steadily. He seemed to be in doubt as to how he should begin what he had to say. "Tamsin," he went on presently, "you will forgive me for calling you by your christian name, but I knew you in your father's days."

"Of course you must call me Tamsin. Why you used to kiss me when I was a little girl."

"Did I?" laughed the old man, "but the years pass very quickly, don't they? You were a little girl then, and now you are a young lady, and the patroness of the Gildershaw parish. Tamsin, forgive me for speaking plainly, but why did you offer the living to Godolphin?"

Her eyes hardened in a second; she knew he had led the conversation to the point he desired. "A foolish girl's whim, I expect," she replied.

"You hadn't any particular reason for offering it to him?" queried the bishop.

"I didn't care at the time who had it," was her answer, "except——"

"Yes, except what?" the bishop asked as she hesitated.

"Bishop, do you want me to be absolutely frank?" asked the girl.

"Of course I do."

"Then I may tell you that one of the reasons I had for asking him was partly to spite you."

"To spite me?" exclaimed the old man.

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"Yes," replied the girl. "I was determined that as I was the patroness of the living I would exercise my rights. Don't misunderstand me. I cared very little about the Church, or what it stood for. To me it was little more than—" She hesitated a second as if afraid of hurting the prelate's feelings, and then went on. "I believe I was thinking of my father when I made my choice."

"I don't understand."

"You will in a minute," went on the girl a little excitedly. "Although I am not a religious girl myself, my father was a religious man. He believed greatly in the Church, but although he liked you personally he did not believe in you."

"But—but," protested the bishop, astonished at the girl's words.

"He did not believe in your ritualism, or your extreme ideas," went on the girl, "and I know he intended, when Mr. Whitecross had to give up, to appoint a man after his own heart. He wanted a broad-minded man, a real man, and a gentleman."

"But I don't see——"

"Mr. Whitecross outlived my father," went on the girl, "and thus his duties fell to me. I don't care tuppence about the Church, but I expect I had my father's words in my mind when Mr. Blackburn came to me about it. I hated the class of men you favoured, and I determined I wouldn't have one of them. There was another thing, too. Mr. Blackburn told me about some wonderful experiences they had had at Ben's Cross, and how a great industrial trouble had been settled. This came about very largely through the influence of Mr. Nick Trebartha who had married an old schoolfriend of mine."

The bishop nodded. "I remember it perfectly. It was a wonderful happening—although I don't believe in such movements as a general rule," he added.

"Anyhow, I like Nick Trebartha," went on Tamsin, "and when Mr. Blackburn told me about a friend of his who was a

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clergyman, I acted on the impulse of the moment, and offered him the living."

"Without knowing anything about him?" asked the bishop.

"I learnt a great deal about him afterwards," replied the girl. "Nick and Naomi brought him over, and he seemed so transparently honest, so sincere, and at the same time such a gentleman, that I was really anxious for him to accept."

"And that is all? You had no interest in him beyond that?"

"Not a bit," replied the girl bluntly.

"That is what I came about," the bishop went on, after a silence. "Have you seen much of Godolphin since he became rector?"

"He has been in the house perhaps half a dozen times," replied the girl, watching the bishop closely.

"I hope you have seen by this time that you made a foolish choice."

"In what way?" and again Tamsin's eyes hardened.

"Of course you know he has created a great deal of disturbance in the parish?"

Tamsin was silent.

"It would seem from his public utterances that he practically believed in nothing when he came," went on the old man. "Indeed, he said as much the Sunday after that awful colliery accident."

Still the girl was silent.

"Since then," went on the bishop, "it appears that he has said many wild and foolish things. He has avowed that the sacraments are not a necessary part of religion. He has expressed the belief that miracles do not matter. Indeed, I am told he has disturbed the whole parish. You see," he went on, "it was most unwise for him to attack the town in the way he did. People do not like to be told that their town is utterly unchristian, utterly pagan. And that is not all.

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Many of the best families in the parish have been driven from the Church."

Tamsin had sat with compressed lips and a far-away look in her eyes during the whole time he had been talking, but she still continued to be silent.

"I have been obliged to take notice of these things," went on the bishop. "As a rule I do not care to interfere with local troubles, but in this case I was obliged to. I sent for Godolphin," he added, "and he came to see me."

"Yes?" but it did not sound like Tamsin's voice at all.

"You see a memorial had been sent to me signed by the leading people in the town asking for my advice and help, and of course I had to take notice of it. That was why I sent for Godolphin. I am asked to persuade him to resign the living," he concluded.

"May I ask what I have to do with this?" Her question came out as suddenly as a shot from a pistol.

"You are the patroness of the living, my dear, and I naturally wanted to consult you before taking any definite steps."

"Then what do you want me to do?"

"I have reason for believing that if you associate yourself with this petition he will resign," replied the bishop, "and this would be an easy way out of our difficulty. There would be no fuss, no bother, and, I hope, no scandal."

"Scandal!" repeated the girl.

"Yes, if in his letter of resignation to me he were to say that, considering the best interests of the parish he thought it wise to leave, the whole thing could be settled without undue disturbance."

"And you wish me to associate myself with the memorial sent to you?"

"Don't you think it would be best, my dear?"

"And what would become of the parish?"

"I don't think I quite understand."

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"Yes, you do," replied the girl bluntly; she was white to the lips now. "Have you ever heard Mr. Godolphin preach?" she added.

"No, but I have read reports of his sermons in the *Gildershaw Gazette*."

"A paper owned by one of his enemies," and there was a strange tone in her voice as she uttered the words.

"Have you heard him preach?" asked the bishop.

"Yes," replied the girl.

"And what have you thought of his sermons?" He spoke in a casual way as though he were only mildly interested in Tamsin's opinions.

"I don't know that I ever considered them as sermons," was her reply. "I only know this; they have made me think of Christianity as I have never thought of it before—Yes I must be frank. Perhaps my opinions are of no value, and you will regard them as the vapid utterances of a callow, irresponsible chit of a girl; but in a way I represent thousands of others. Christianity was a dead letter to me, and Christ was little more than a myth. I don't know that I believe in either now, but he has made me think of Christianity as I have never thought of it before; and what is more he has aroused the whole town to think. Religion, Christianity, has become, as far as Gildershaw is concerned, the most vital thing in the world; and I tell you this," her voice became tense as she spoke, "if you send Mr. Godolphin away you will commit a crime."

"My dear young lady!" protested the bishop.

"I knew you were coming," went on the girl almost passionately. "Dick Grimshaw was here last night, and he led me to believe that you would come. I don't know much about the Church, for that matter I don't care much; but I do know this: the town has been altogether different during these last few months. Why, the sister of one of the maids here in the house who had gone to the bad and who had given up a decent

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life altogether, has been rescued by what Mr. Godolphin has done, and she is only an example of scores of others."

The bishop looked at her in astonishment as though he could not believe his own ears ; evidently this was not what he had expected her to say.

"Then you do not associate yourself with this memorial?" he almost stammered presently.

"Associate myself with such a memorial!" cried the girl, her voice trembling with passion. "I don't believe you understand or you would never suggest such a thing. Who sent the memorial?" she went on. "Have the people who signed it any real knowledge of what Mr. Godolphin is trying to do? Did they care tuppence about the Church before he came?"

"More than one of them have been among the most generous contributors to the Church in the diocese," replied the bishop.

"It may be, but what did they know about religion, real religion? What have they understood about Christ? Would you have the parish drift back to what it was before Mr. Godolphin came?"

"Perhaps you don't quite understand," and by this time the bishop had got over his excitement. "I am an old man, my dear, and during my life I have had a wide and varied experience. I have lived long enough to have lost faith in spasmodic movements, and I have little sympathy in a religion of mere emotionalism. I have to deal with facts as they are, and when generous supporters of the Church, men who have given princely sums to the sacred causes which I represent, plead for his removal, I cannot ignore their appeal. You must remember that Gildershaw is an important parish, and when a rector comes into it whose aim is to destroy the most sacred traditions of the Church——"

"I know nothing, and care nothing about sacred traditions!" cried the girl passionately. "I only know that the Church which had been empty for years is now crowded, and I know

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that hundreds, yes, hundreds of young men and women who had given up all thought of Christ are now eagerly inquiring about Him. I know that a new spirit has come into the town, and when you ask me to associate myself with a petition for the removal of the man who has been the main cause of these things, I simply reply that I won't do it."

"Of course I shall be very sorry to act in opposition to you," went on the old man, "and of course too, owing to the laws of the country a bishop's power over his clergy is very limited; but I can't, I simply can't ignore rank heresy. When a man practically denies the sacraments——"

"It's a lie," protested the girl. "If——" she dashed the tears from her eyes as she spoke. "Why only last Sunday night when Mr. Godolphin invited us all to stay to the Communion of the Lord's supper I simply longed to stay—only somehow I didn't believe in the Christ he was so sure of. But I longed to believe, longed to have the same certainty that he had. I hate talking like this, but I can't help it. I used not to care a fig about such things, but when I saw hundreds of young men and women, and a lot of older ones too, staying to the Communion; people who had given up going to Church and who had discarded all belief in Christianity, I wanted to join them."

"Is this true, my dear?" and the old man looked at her kindly. He could not help being moved by the tenseness of her tones, and by her evident earnestness. Extreme High Churchman as he was, bigoted as he was said to be in relation to sacerdotalism, he was an honest man, and he could not help being moved by her evident sincerity.

"It is true!" she replied. "What I have tried to tell you only hints at the truth. I know I am not the one to tell you these things, because I have no real faith myself, but I tell you this, if a movement is set on foot for driving Mr. Godolphin out of the parish, I will fight it! I know I haven't an atom of real faith in Christianity, but I simply can't help having faith

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in the man who is doing so much for the town. I don't know a bit what to do, but I will consult my lawyer, and he shall tell me. Yes, I will fight it!" and again the girl dashed the tears from her eyes. "Yes, I will fight it as long as I have sixpence left!"

"There shall be no need for that, my dear, if things are as you say," replied the old man. "I may not like Mr. Godolphin as a man, and certainly I would rather have had someone else in the parish, but I trust I am not so blind that I cannot see the hand of God in all this. I will have searching inquiries made, and if things are as you say, I will use every endeavour in my power to support him, rather than drive him away."

By this time Tamsin had overcome the excitement which had almost mastered her, and was able to appreciate the change in the bishop's demeanour. She, girl-like, had been carried away by her impetuosity; she had looked upon him as a sacerdotalist and nothing more. But she understood him better now. This old bishop was a man of God, and although she did not believe as he believed, a feeling of respect, and something more than respect came into her heart for him.

"Thank you, my dear, for telling me these things," went on the old man. "Perhaps I have been rather hasty, and perhaps more than a little prejudiced, but I will certainly inquire closely into the matter, and I will not act upon hasty judgments. There, I must be going now."

Tamsin accompanied him to the door, and waited while the chauffeur brought his car. "You must feel a great sense of responsibility," said the old man as he looked across the broad stretching park. "All this must be a burden for your young shoulders. Have you ever thought of sharing it with anyone?"

Tamsin was silent.

"I have heard gossip to the effect that you are going to marry young Grimshaw," he added. "You will excuse me for asking, my dear, but is it true?"

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“Why ? ” asked the girl.

The bishop did not reply for a few seconds, then he said slowly. “I am told that in many ways he is a most estimable young man. He comes of a vigorous stock too, and his father is one of the most generous supporters of the Church in the diocese. But marriage is a very serious matter, my dear, remember that, won’t you ? ”

“Yes, I will remember that,” replied the girl.

Within half an hour after the bishop had gone Dick Grimshaw was announced.

CHAPTER XXII

TAMSIN DISCOVERS A SECRET

“**T**HE Bishop has been here, hasn’t he ?” Dick asked the moment they were alone together. The bulldog expression on his face was more than ordinarily pronounced, and in his eyes was a look of determination.

“It would be interesting to know by what right you ask what visitors I’ve had,” replied the girl.

“Perhaps I shall come to that in a minute,” replied Dick. “Anyhow I know he has been here.”

“Then your question is superfluous.”

There was a tone of defiance in Tamsin’s voice which Dick was not slow in interpreting. He could not by any stretch of imagination be recommended as a diplomatist ; nevertheless, he was keen-witted and quick to understand. Rightly or wrongly, Dick had come to the conclusion that matters between himself and Tamsin had come to a crisis, and that if his wishes were to be fulfilled he must take immediate action. Of *finesse* he knew nothing, neither indeed did he believe in it. The Grimshaws, he told himself, who half a century before were a rough working people, had won, not only their position in the town, but their great wealth, by meeting every difficulty with frontal attacks, and by using every weapon at their disposal, whatever that weapon might be.

As we have seen, Dick had determined to have Tamsin Rashleigh as his wife. He was intensely ambitious, and the thought of marrying into the Rashleigh family not only

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flattered his vanity, but appealed to his imagination. "When Tamsin is my wife," he had said to himself again and again, "I shall be the biggest man in the whole district, and hold up my head with the highest in the county."

As we have seen, however, he had not been altogether unsuccessful.

Tamsin, inexperienced, impetuous, and hungry for excitement, had forgotten what was due to her name and associations, and, perhaps carried away by Dick's ardour, had more than once placed herself in a false position. In a way too, the young Yorkshireman had impressed her. Every woman admires strength and virility, and whatever else might be said of Dick, he was a strong, determined man. Every woman, too, desires admiration, and loves to be wooed; therefore, Dick's evident admiration, and the ardour of his wooing, had not been without effect.

Lately, however, Dick had seen, or thought he had seen, a change in her. She had seemed to regard him as belonging to a class inferior to her own, and to resent his overtures. Moreover, he had associated the change in Tamsin with the coming of the new rector. At first he had been contemptuous of the idea, but as the weeks went by the feeling grew. He knew that from the standpoint of worldly advantages he was in an infinitely superior position to young David Godolphin. He believed too that he was more attractive as a man. Dick had always appraised himself at his full value, and yet from the first day he had seen the young rector he had looked on him with disfavour.

"He shan't stay here long," Dick had determined soon after David had appeared in the parish, and he had used every endeavour to lessen whatever influence he might have obtained.

The position which the Grimshaws held in the district, too, were in his favour. Dick's father was a millionaire. He had, during the war, made huge government contracts, and had

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not been slow to take advantage of them. Moreover, he had been wise in anticipating the slump which came afterwards, so that while others became poor, Richard Grimshaw continued to amass money.

Desiring to stand well in the neighbourhood, too, he had given huge sums to charities, as well as being the largest donor to some of the bishop's pet schemes.

That was why Dick was sure he could drive David out of the parish, and when presently the young rector preached his series of outspoken sermons, he was not slow in taking what he regarded as the necessary steps.

"Look here, Tammy, you know why I have come," he blurted out.

"Indeed?"

"Yes. You remember what I said to you last night?"

"I remember that you came to the house unbidden, and said some very impertinent things," replied the girl.

Had Dick understood Tamsin's character better he would have adopted a different rôle; but as we have said, he believed that matters between himself and Tamsin had reached a crisis, and he determined to be true to the old Grimshaw method of attack, which was by sudden onslaught. "That fellow has poisoned your mind against me," he asserted.

"What fellow?" asked Tamsin, like one puzzled.

"You know very well. You have never been the same girl to me since he came. Oh, I make no bones about it," he added. "I hate him, and I am determined that he shall leave the parish."

"Then it was through you that the memorial was sent to the bishop?" asked the girl.

"Yes, if you like. To be frank, Tammy, I don't believe in him, and I *do* believe he is doing a great deal of harm in the parish. He has upset everything and everybody, and when the excitement is over, things will be worse than they were before. I don't believe in religious quackery. My father was

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an old-fashioned Churchman before me, and if I am anything, I am an old-fashioned Churchman too. Anyhow, I have determined to get him out of the parish."

"And do you think you will succeed?" asked the girl.

Dick laughed raucously. "I have no fear about that," he replied. "And what is more you are going to help me."

"Indeed?"

"Yes. As you know, the bishop wants him to go. It has been made plain to him that the fellow has been and is a disturbing influence here, and the bishop is not a man to disregard the wishes of such people as those who signed the memorial. It wouldn't pay him to," he added significantly. "There are several funds urgently in need of support, and money talks in the Church as well as elsewhere."

"I think you know," Tamsin replied after a long silence, "that I am the patroness of the living, and that Mr. Godolphin came here at my invitation."

"Yes, I know that," replied Dick with a laugh. "Of course in a way it was a great lark. You have no more faith in religion than the man in the moon, and it was only a girl's whim on your part to get him here; but the thing has become serious now I can tell you, and the bishop isn't the man to ignore the request of the most influential people in the town. That is why he must go."

"What can the bishop do?" asked the girl.

"He can ask him to leave Gildershaw."

"But supposing he won't listen to the bishop?"

"That is where you come in," replied the young Yorkshireman bluntly. "He told the bishop only yesterday, and I have every reason for believing it, that if you supported the petition, he would resign."

"And if I did support the petition, and if he were to leave the parish?—What then?"

"What then?" asked Dick. "For one thing we should have no more of his religious quackery, and for another

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he would no longer be here to poison your mind against me."

"And if I refuse?"

Dick looked at her steadily, and there was a menacing as well as a pleading look in his eyes. "You don't mean that, Tammy?"

"And if I refuse?" repeated the girl, and Dick knew by the hard glitter in her eyes, and by the tense tone of her voice, something of the feelings which possessed her.

For a moment a great fear came into his heart. Up to now, while he hated Godolphin, and while he believed that through him Tamsin was alienated from him, he had not really doubted that he would have his way; but now he feared.

Let me do justice to Dick Grimshaw. He loved Tamsin as much as he was capable of loving anyone on earth, although there was a great deal of alloy in the gold of his love. He saw in her means of satisfying his ambitions, and of gratifying his passions; but he loved her. That was why, being what he was, he would stop at nothing in order to get her. He would fight for her to the last ounce of his strength. He would use every weapon, no matter what it might be, to destroy those who opposed him. Being what he was, moreover, he did not realize the kind of girl Tamsin was, or how his method of trying to win her defeated his own end. Had he appealed to the girl's honour, and told her because she, by her encouragement had led him to love her, had he pleaded that she would wreck his life and drive him to the devil, she might have made a different response. But he had threatened her, and Tamsin was not one who easily yielded to threats.

"What do you mean by that?" he asked.

"You tell me that if I supported the petition sent to the bishop, Mr. Godolphin would resign," she said quietly. "But supposing I refuse? Supposing that, because I believe he is doing a great deal of good in the parish, I decline to take part in driving him out? What then?"

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She said nothing about her conversation with the bishop ; nothing of the change which had come over the old prelate after she told him what she believed to be the truth. Something, she knew not what, caused her to be silent on these matters.

" I don't like threatening, Tammy," Dick said presently, " but as I said last night I am in a desperate mood. Look here, I want to be perfectly honest with you. I don't care a damn about his religious quackery, and under ordinary circumstances I shouldn't care tuppence whether the fellow stayed in the parish or left it ; but he is my enemy. He is turning you against me ; that is why I am determined he shall leave, and that is why I have asked you to support that petition."

" Then let me tell you this," replied the girl, and all the intensity of her nature seemed to be in the words she uttered. " I refuse to support any petition that would lead him to resign. More than that, if there was any danger of his leaving, I should use every means in my power to persuade him to stay, and I would fight, to the last ounce of my strength and to the last penny I possessed, on his behalf. Why," and there was infinite scorn in her voice, " do you think I would become a tool to further the plans of such as *you* ? "

" Do you love the fellow ? " gasped Dick.

" It is impertinent of you to ask such a question," she replied, " but since I wish no misunderstanding in the matter, I will repeat what I have said to you before. I don't love him. I never thought of loving him."

" Then you refuse ? "

" Of course I refuse. Do you think I would become the enemy of such a man as he, to please such a man as *you* ? " and there was infinite scorn in her voice.

Dick's usually florid face became as pale as ashes, while the look of a devil shone from his eyes. He believed her when she told him that she did not love Godolphin ; nevertheless, his

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hatred for him became intensified. He saw too that his danger of losing her was real ; that in a way he could not understand, he had antagonized her, and had gone far to destroy what little influence he had over her.

Not that he meant to give her up. He would fight for her to the very last. He hadn't been scheming and plotting through the long months to give up at the first defeat ; and he would conquer her too, conquer her in his own way. Then when she was his wife, he would make her suffer for what he was suffering now.

For a few seconds the two stood looking at each other. He with a grim, determined expression on his face, his teeth firmly set, his eyes almost red with passion ; she, fearing the future, yet defiant. All the pride of the Rashleigh race surged up in her that moment, and no matter what she might suffer she would do what she had said.

"I don't want to threaten you, Tammy," he repeated, "but please remember I am a man of my word. I told you last night that if you refused to support the petition which has been sent to the bishop, I would publish the letter which we discussed in the *Gildershaw Gazette* ; and that I would give a full account of the Scarborough episode, but I hope you will not drive me to do it."

"You can do what you like," she replied quietly.

"Don't drive me to do it, Tammy," he urged, and there was a strange intonation in his voice.

"You can do what you like," she repeated, "and remember this, Mr. Grimshaw. Only my friends and my equals use my Christian name. Therefore, I am Miss Rashleigh to you. Moreover, it might save you unpleasantness to know that my servants will, in the future, refuse you admission to this house." She still spoke quietly, but her every word cut like a knife, and he, insensitive though he might be, felt the sting of what she had said.

"You mean that ?" he gasped.

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"I am not in the habit of saying what I don't mean," was her reply.

"And I will tell you what I mean," he said in a loud, hoarse voice, "I will give you one month to make up your mind; yes, one month; and if at the end of one month you don't withdraw every word you have said, that letter you wrote me shall be on the tongue of every foul-mouthed hag in Gildershaw! That Scarborough episode shall be discussed in such a way that you will be ashamed to show your face in the streets! You say you mean what you say.—I mean what I say, too! What is more, that hypocritical bounder up at the rectory shall know of everything. He shall be told that the patroness of the living is——" What he said further I will not set down, neither, for that matter, did Tamsin hear.

Crossing the room, she pressed the bell push, and a servant appeared.

"Pilkington," she said, "will you show Mr. Grimshaw out please; and will you remember, and tell the other servants to remember, that he is no longer to be admitted to the house."

Like the well-trained servant he was, the old butler showed no surprise.

"Certainly, Miss Rashleigh," he said, holding the door open, as if awaiting Dick's departure.

As for the young Yorkshireman, he stood glaring first at Tamsin, and then at the servant, as if undecided what to do. His heart was a raging fire; he had never dreamt that Tamsin would have defied him in such a way, and for a few seconds he was on the point of breaking forth in a torrent of wild abuse. Then seeing the butler standing at the door, and noting the pride in Tamsin's eyes, he walked out without a word.

"By God, she shall pay for that!" he muttered as he entered the car.

Outwardly, Tamsin had been cool and collected while she

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had been talking with Dick Grimshaw. Her voice had not risen above conversational tones, neither, except for the pallor of her cheeks and the strange light in her eyes, had she appeared excited.

But she was excited. She realized that the young Yorkshireman's threat was real. She knew that she was in his power. Thus, while she had told him to do his worst, the thought of the letter she had written being published in the *Gildershaw Gazette* was untold agony to her.

Tamsin Rashleigh was a proud girl. Say what we will, pride of birth can be, and often is, a real factor in life ; and Tamsin, although she never thought of boasting of her name or lineage was, nevertheless, influenced by the fact that she bore an old name, and that her ancestors had for many generations held a position second to none in the district.

Thus the thought of Dick's threat really frightened her. To know that the letter she had written in a moment of mad folly would be read by evil-minded people, and that her actions would be discussed by those who would put the worst construction upon them, caused her to writhe with shame.

But that was not all, neither was it the worst. She, Tamsin Rashleigh, had cheapened herself by being on intimate terms with such a man as Grimshaw. She had done nothing wrong, and never even thought of wrong ; but she had been foolish and worse than foolish. She had been false to the name she bore, false to the traditions of her race. Never had she been so ashamed of herself as when she remembered that, innocent as her life was, she had given occasion for her name to be associated with a man she despised.

"Why was I such a mad fool ?" she asked herself again and again. "How could I, the daughter of such a man as my father, so lower myself as to be on terms of intimacy with a creature like that ?"

The more she reflected on the situation, the angrier did she become. It was not the thought of David Godolphin being

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driven out of the parish which affected her, it was the fact that by her madness she had placed herself, Tamsin Rashleigh, in the power of a coarse, common parvenu.

Nevertheless, she had to face the situation. She told herself, remembering Dick's words, that unless within the next month she withdrew what she had said to him, and allowed him to continue her friend, she would be the subject of malicious and evil gossip in the town where for many generations her name had been almost revered.

What should she do? Should she weakly yield to Dick's threats, and admit that she had been wrong? She discarded the suggestion the moment it flashed into her mind. Anything but that! Better a thousand times to pay the price of her madness than to yield to such a demand.

But the thought was terrible. She had no doubt that Dick would be true to his word. She believed too that the editor of the *Gildershaw Gazette* was Dick's chattel, and that he would, at his master's dictum, insert whatever he demanded. Well, let them do their worst. She had been a fool, and she would pay the price of her folly. Let gossips gossip, and let the foulest construction be placed upon her actions. She would deny nothing; she would not even appear to take notice of what had taken place.

Then she remembered something else.

"What is more," Dick had said, "that hypocritical bounder up at the Rectory shall know everything, and he shall be told that the patroness of the living is——"

She started to her feet with a gasp of agony. She had steeled herself to the thought that she would be the subject of gossip for foul tongues, but she had not realized that David Godolphin would hear of the slander. "What would he say when he read the letter? What would he think when he learnt about the Scarborough episode?"

Then she knew the truth.

Up to now David Godolphin had simply been to her the

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Rector of Gildershaw. She had of course been interested in him as the incumbent of the parish. It was through her that he had come to Gildershaw. She had also been interested in the experiences through which he had passed. She had admired him for his transparent honesty and sincerity, and she had been influenced by the change which had come over him. That was why she had refused the suggestion of the bishop, and declared that she would use whatever influence she had to keep him in the parish.

But this !

Dick Grimshaw had told her that ever since David Godolphin had come to Gildershaw she had been different towards him, and as she reflected she knew that he spoke the truth. Even on the very afternoon when David had come to her house as a stranger, she had been angry that Dick had called her by her Christian name and spoken to her in terms of familiarity. She had thought little of it at the time, even though she had persisted in her quondam friendship. Nevertheless, she had been indignant with herself for so far forgetting herself as to encourage Dick's friendship.

Now she knew the reason why. Knew that David Godolphin was the only man in the world to her, knew that she loved him like her own life.

No ! no ! He must never know of the mad letter she had written ! He must never hear of the ghastly Scarborough episode ! Not that it would make any difference to their relationship. It was not that at all. He simply regarded her as the patroness of the living, and never had another thought concerning her ; but she could not bear for him to think of her as being in the power of a man like Grimshaw.

What should she do ? For herself she could bear anything. She had already faced the thought of being the subject of slander in the town, and had decided that rather than obey Dick's demand she would suffer in silence. But this was different. At whatever cost, David Godolphin must know

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nothing. She must think of some means whereby the truth could be kept from him.

But she could think of nothing, and with agony she reflected that nothing could hinder her name being cheapened and sullied in the eyes of the man she loved.

At that moment a knock came to the door, and a servant entered. "The Rector has called, please, Miss Rashleigh."

"I can't see him!" she said to herself. "I simply can't!"

"Shall I show him in here, please?" asked the servant.

"Where is he now?" asked Tamsin, struggling to control herself.

"He is in the library."

"I can't see him! I simply can't!" she repeated to herself. Then aloud she said: "Tell him, Pilkington, that I will be with him in a few minutes."

CHAPTER XXIII

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FIVE minutes later Tamsin Rashleigh made her way towards the library. During those five minutes she had suppressed all signs of emotion and had obtained complete mastery over herself. She had realized that a refusal on her part to see David Godolphin would be misconstrued both by him and by the servants, and that at all hazards the truth must not be known.

When she entered the room, therefore, although she was somewhat pale, she showed no other sign of the scenes through which she had passed that afternoon, and went towards him with a steady step.

"I believe I know why you have called, Mr. Godolphin," she greeted him, and her voice was quite natural. "For that matter, I think I almost expected you."

"Why?" asked David.

"The bishop has been here," she replied, "and we had a long talk about you. You went to see him yesterday, didn't you?"

"Perhaps you know why I went to see him," David replied. Then seeing her pallor he exclaimed: "I am sorry that I am such a bother to you. You didn't think when you offered me the living that I should be such a nuisance, did you?"

"Please don't say that, Mr. Godolphin."

She spoke kindly, but David could not help feeling that there was a change in her demeanour towards him. In the past, even when she had been angry with him, there had been a

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feeling of camaraderie between them which enabled him to speak freely ; but that had gone now ; she was simply the lady of the Manor, while he was rector of the parish.

He knew the meaning of it, or at least he thought he did. He remembered what had passed between him and the bishop, and as she had just told him, the bishop had been to see her that very afternoon. Doubtless the prelate had informed her of the memorial which had been sent to him, and had asked her to associate herself with it. Doubtless, too, she had fallen in with the bishop's wishes. That would explain why, in spite of her desire to be kind, there was a suggestion of restraint in her tones.

" I tried to come earlier," David said. " I told the bishop that I should see you, and I hoped to get here earlier in the day ; but there were a thousand things to do. He asked you to persuade me to resign, didn't he ? "

In spite of herself, Tamsin gave a sigh of relief. She had no reason for thinking so, but a great dread filled her heart lest David knew of Dick Grimshaw's visit, and what he had said to her. Evidently, however, he was utterly ignorant of it, and he had simply come there to discuss his interview with the bishop.

" Yes," she replied, " he did suggest it."

" And you feel like falling in with his wishes ? "

She did not reply to that. Much as she wanted to tell him, she could not bring herself to describe the result of their interview.

" Naturally, I have been thinking a great deal about it," David went on, " and I have come to discuss the whole matter with you."

A look of eager questioning came into her eyes as he said this. Her newly-discovered love made her long to know what was in his heart.

" I don't care a fig about that memorial," and there was laughter in David's voice. " You see, I know what it means."

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“What does it mean, then?”

“I would rather not tell you now, but I think it is plain enough. Anyhow, it doesn't affect me. I am perfectly indifferent to what such people may say or think. I don't want to boast, indeed, I am not in a boasting mood; the thing is too serious for that; all the same, the true answer to the memorial is the difference in the Church and in the town.”

“Mr. Godolphin,” and there was a bright light in Tamsin's eyes. “I don't think I have spoken to you since the night Nick Trebartha and Naomi were here, when you preached the first of those sermons which has led to—all this. May I ask you a question? I know what the answer will be before you give it, all the same, I can't help asking it. There is no doubt about your experiences, is there?”

“That is why I feel so indifferent about the memorial,” and David laughed again. “It is not something about which one can speak lightly, and yet I want to tell you this, Miss Rashleigh. You remember that night of the colliery accident, don't you? You know how I told you in this very room that I was sure of nothing, but that I meant to be sure? I told you that I was sure God could be found, and that I meant to find Him. You remember that, don't you?”

Tamsin nodded.

“Well, I *am* sure. Christ is not merely a name in history to me. He is real to me. He is as real to me as you are, and because He is real, God is real, everything is real. Yes,” he went on, “I can see what you are thinking about, but I have tested my experiences by every test I can think of, and now I have no doubt whatever. As I remarked just now, that is why I am so indifferent to the memorial.”

“Then you do not intend resigning?” Tamsin asked eagerly.

“If I do, it will not be because of what the Grimshaw section of the parish may wish, neither will it be because of the bishop.

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I know I am not *persona grata* with him. His conception of religion and mine are altogether different. He is an ecclesiastic, a sacerdotalist, a sacramentarian of the extreme order, while to me such things don't touch the heart of Christianity at all. They are merely the *bric-a-brac*, the non-essentials of a great vital reality. No, the bishop's wishes do not weigh with me, and he has no hold over me at all ; in the real sense of the word I am as good a Churchman as he is, and there is no Church court in the land that can turn me out."

"Then you don't intend resigning?" she asked again.

"That depends."

"Depends on what?"

"On you. Yes, I mean it. You are the patroness of the living ; it was through you I came, and if you wish me to resign, even although it may be like pulling out my heart strings to do so, I shall resign. Mind, I have little or no faith in Church patronage, all the same, it was because of you I came here, and if it is your will that I go away, I shall go away."

Quick as a flash of light Tamsin's mind fastened on what this would mean. If David Godolphin left the parish he would know nothing of the ghastly threat which Dick Grimshaw had made, neither would he ever know the gossip which would naturally arise ; even if he did know he would be far away from the town where her name would be made common by gossiping tongues.

For a moment it seemed an easy way out of her trouble ; she had only to say that she thought it best for him to leave Gildershaw, and he, proud as he was, would go. He would immediately make it known that he had given up the living, and when Dick Grimshaw heard of it he would think that she had capitulated, and be ready to make terms.

But what about David ?

Oh, she wished her brain was not in such a mad maze, and that she could think more clearly ! But everything

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had come so suddenly. Two hours before she did not know, did not dream that this man was all the world to her, while now——

“You said just now, Mr. Godolphin,” she was able to say at length, “that the real answer to the memorial was the change in the Church and in the town. Have you forgotten that, or have you no longer any interest in the Church and in the town? Besides, what of yourself? What will you do?”

“As far as I am concerned,” replied David, “I do not trouble. Of course I am thinking of the matter as you evidently have it in your mind. God will find some work for me to do. As for the Church and the town——”

“Yes?” queried Tamsin as he hesitated. “Have they not to be considered?”

“Of course they have to be considered; but if you wish me to go, am I not bound as a matter of honour?” he replied. “Could I, as an honourable man, remain here when you, the cause of my coming here, desire me to go?”

“Is not that pure sophistry, Mr. Godolphin?” asked the girl impatiently. “The real question is, considering it from your standpoint, *ought* you to go? Do you *wish* to go?”

“Wish to go!” and he spoke with a kind of passion. “I would give my heart’s blood to remain. Why, every fibre of my being longs to stay;—and I have learnt to love—the people. I feel as though the very heart of the place has enfolded me. I believe I have only begun my work here, only just begun to win the love and confidence of the people, and although all I said just now is true, I dread to think of what would happen if I were to leave.”

He had started to his feet by this time, and was walking around the room as he always did when he was more than ordinarily moved. For a moment he seemed to become oblivious of her presence—oblivious of everything save the facts that stared him in the face. Tamsin watched him like one fascinated. This was a man transparently honest, sincere

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to the heart's core ; one who would be true to his convictions wherever they might lead him.

She found herself comparing him with Dick Grimshaw. She visualized the young Yorkshireman as she had seen him when they parted an hour or two before, saw the stern strength in his face, in the pugnacious, bulldog, determined look in his eyes, in the grim strength of his chin, and the coarseness of his nature. Then she saw David Godolphin, tall, athletic, refined, a gentleman. A man without a particle of meanness in his heart, and with a light in his eyes which told of things unseen. No wonder she loved him ! No wonder her heart went out to him even as the heart of a mother goes out to her child. Could she give him the word to go when his going would mean the light going out of her life ? More than that, could she deprive the town of such a man because she was afraid of what Dick Grimshaw would say and do ? Yes, she must face that, for she knew that the young manufacturer meant what he said ; knew too that by his influence in the town he could so blacken her name that she would be a by-word among the people. More than that, David Godolphin would hear of her shame, and think of her accordingly. Well, what if he did ? He cared nothing for her beyond the fact that she was his patroness. Besides, better a thousand times that she should suffer than that he should go away leaving the people like sheep without a shepherd.

It was a hard battle to fight, but she fought it and won her victory, but the struggle was not over yet.

"You must not go, Mr. Godolphin," she said suddenly. "You must stay."

"Do *you* say that ?"

"Of course I do," and she tried to speak lightly.

"But the bishop ?" he queried almost weakly. "Have you not promised him to support the memorial ? Do you not wish me to go ?"

"I have refused to support the memorial," she replied. "I

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told the bishop that although I had no faith in your profession I believed you were a sincere and honest man, and if he tried to drive you away I would fight for you."

She had a kind of savage delight in saying this. She felt, in a way she could not understand, that it would help David to think kindly of her when her name was blackened in his ears.

"You will stay, won't you, Mr. Godolphin?" she urged.

He made no answer, but stood still for more than a minute like a man irresolute. Then, as if ignoring her existence, he began examining the backs of the ancient tomes which filled the book cases, and looking at the paintings of the Rashleighs and the Wentworths that hung upon the walls.

Tamsin watched him like one wondering. Surely this man usually so courteous was not intentionally rude.

"You will stay, won't you?" she persisted.

Still David did not speak, but he turned his eyes away from the books and paintings and gazed steadily at the girl who sat near him.

"Miss Rashleigh," he said at last, his voice hoarse; "I told you just now that whether I went or stayed depended on you; it is true, but not in the way I had it in my mind just now. Do you remember that night when the bishop preached my induction sermon?" he asked suddenly.

She nodded, wondering what was in his mind.

"You asked me my advice then about marrying young Grimshaw," he went on, "and I told you that it would be a crime, a sin against High Heaven. Afterwards I told you, when you said you had made up your mind to marry him, that you must get another man to call the banns, another man to marry you, because I wouldn't. Do you know why?"

She stared at him in silent wonder.

"This was why," he went on; "it was true I believed it would be sacrilege for you to marry such a man, but that was not the real reason for my saying what I did, I did not know it

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then, but the truth came to me afterwards. It was because I loved you, loved you the very first moment I saw you. No, don't look at me like that ; I don't know at all why I am making this confession, but I can't help myself."

David had been watching her closely while he was speaking, and saw the look that came over her face as he made his confession. While he spoke of what he had said about Grimshaw, he thought she appeared relieved rather than otherwise, but when he told her his own feelings he saw what looked to him like horror and repugnance.

"You love me !—*me* !" she gasped.

"I had to tell you," said David, and he was so much wrought upon that he hardly realized the meaning of the words that were passing his lips. "Yes, I know it seems horribly mean on my part, and perhaps I appear to you as a sort of self-seeking hypocrite."

"Don't," she broke in, "*don't* !"

He misunderstood her. Realizing his own position he was afraid lest she misinterpreted his actions.

"But I must," he protested. "I didn't mean to tell you this, never thought of speaking about such a thing, but you made me. Still, I want to be honest with you ; I owe that to myself at all events. I know that you are the lady of the manor, and that you are a rich woman ; while I, apart from your bounty, am practically penniless. Thus it seems mean, contemptible on my part to make such a plea ; all the same, I must speak. You asked me to continue being rector here, but I couldn't fall in with that request without telling you the truth. I think I have loved you from the first time I saw you—I should find it more easy to say this if you were poor, and were not what you are but—I have told you, and now my future is in your hands."

"Oh, it is madness !" cried the girl. "How can your future be in my hands ?"

"Because it depends on you whether I stay."

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"Of course you must stay. You are doing a great work here, and it would be a sin for you to leave."

"Doesn't that depend on you?" he asked.

"How can it depend on me?"

"Because—loving you as I do, I couldn't stay here knowing that you were married to that man Grimshaw."

"I shall *never* marry him! I would *die* first!" she almost gasped. She seemed so eager to utter the words that she spoke passionately, angrily.

"Do you mean that? You are not deceiving me, are you?"

"Surely you don't think so meanly of me as that!" Then remembering what she had told him previously she went on almost incoherently: "I know what you are thinking of me. In your heart of hearts you are saying that I am a flirt, that I have jilted him; but I can never do that, never, never—so you must make up your mind to stay here, Mr. Godolphin."

A great surge of joy swept through David's whole being. The thing he feared was groundless; at any rate Tamsin Rashleigh would never marry Dick Grimshaw.

"Then may I hope?" he urged. "May I believe that——?"

David's tongue was loosed now, and he spoke vehemently. All the ardour of his nature, all the pent up feelings of months were poured forth in the story he told her. He became almost eloquent in his pleading. His Celtic blood was on fire, and forgetful of everything he urged the owner of Wentworth Hall to become his wife.

And Tamsin listened, listened eagerly, greedily, joyously. Carried away by his ardour and rejoicing in the thought that her love of which she had not been conscious until an hour or so before was returned, the world seemed flooded with sunshine, and everything became possible.

But this was only for a passing moment. She remembered what Dick Grimshaw had said to her only that afternoon,

called to mind the threat which hung over her life. How could what he asked come to pass when as soon as the truth became known he would shudder at the mention of her name?

"Don't!" she cried. "What you are saying is madness, worse than madness. What you ask is impossible."

Of course he mistook her. Realizing their relative positions, and having no faith in the hope which for a moment had filled him, he interpreted her words to mean an utter rejection of what he had been trying to say; still, he would not give up trying. Realizing, humanly speaking, that his life's happiness depended upon her, he continued to plead. Her wealth was nothing, her position was nothing, he swept such things aside as of no more weight than thistledown.

"Don't say that," he urged. "You say you are not going to marry Grimshaw? Give me some hope."

She longed to tell him the truth, longed to tell him that the reason of her refusal was not because she did not care for him, but because she was thinking of his own happiness. How could she link her life to his? She was thinking of the honour of his name, and knowing that her name would be associated with the foulest gossip, she could not tell him what he wanted to hear. No, it was because she loved him so that she persisted in her refusal. She knew how proud he was, knew how sensitive he was to anything like dishonour. He bore a name as old as her own, a name which he guarded jealously. It was impossible, therefore, for her to rejoice in the happiness he offered her, and to take the cup of joy which he held out to her.

She had mastered herself by this time, and was able to speak connectedly. "Don't mistake me, Mr. Godolphin," she said quietly, "and please don't think that I am indifferent to the honour of your proposal, but if you will think a moment you will see how utterly impossible it is."

"There is only one thing that makes it impossible," replied David. "You do not love me; that is it, isn't it?"

She prayed for forgiveness for the lie she told, but better a

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thousand times, she reflected, that he should believe a lie than that he should know the truth.

"No, I do not love you." She uttered the words in a hard voice, but she spoke each one plainly and without seeming hesitation.

"Thank you," he replied. "You have at least been honest, and of course it was madness on my part ever to dream that you might care for me ; but at least I am thankful for one thing."

"What is that ? " she asked.

"That you are not going to marry Grimshaw. But I will go now, and please forgive me for troubling you."

"But you will not leave Gildershaw, will you, Mr. Godolphin? Please promise me *that!* I shouldn't accept your resignation if you sent it to me," she added with a curious laugh

He made no reply to that, but went towards the door like a man in a dream.

A minute later she watched him as he strode down the drive towards the town.

CHAPTER XXIV

TRIUMPHANT, BUT—— ?

ON the following Sunday night Gildershaw parish Church was again crowded. True there was none of the excitement which was felt on the first two Sundays after the colliery accident, nevertheless, a feeling of expectancy and interest prevailed. Doubtless the fact that every pew was full somewhat accounted for this. As is well known, the very fact of a crowded building creates a feeling of tensity and interest. During the first months of David Godolphin's ministry the Church had been but sparsely attended, and there seemed little or no meaning in the services ; while now even commonplace things seemed to be weighted with significance.

The psychology of crowds is difficult to explain, and many of David Godolphin's enemies were persistent in saying that his sermons would have had little or no effect if preached in a comparatively empty building. His supporters on the other hand asked what had caused the crowds to come, and why the messages he delivered were not only eagerly received, but earnestly discussed in the factories, in the streets, and in the homes of the people.

Whether his enemies or his supporters were right in their contentions, one thing was evident. For months the old Church, which had been empty for so many years, was now Sunday by Sunday crowded to the doors. Doubtless many came out of curiosity, but scarcely any could deny that an atmosphere of reality and conviction pervaded the services.

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From an intellectual standpoint his addresses could not be called great, nevertheless, because he spoke of things of which he was sure, and only of which he was sure, he made others believe.

Thus Christianity had come to have a new meaning in the town, and thousands who had been led to regard it as a spent force, could not help realizing that the Church of which he was the minister, stood for the greatest thing in the world. That was why the crowds continued to flock to hear him ; that was why every institution in the Church throbbed with a new life, while religion, instead of being a commonplace, out of which all life had gone, became more and more the great thing needful.

On this particular Sunday night there were many who said that the young clergyman looked pale and ill ; many noted too that after he had followed the choir boys in to their stall he knelt and prayed longer than usual, as though he felt a special responsibility.

But there was no suggestion of nervousness or of indecision when he entered the pulpit. Never, many declared, had the young clergyman preached as he preached that night, and when at length his sermon came to an end even the most thoughtless realized that there was a Power present which could not be explained away by the sophistries of men.

When the address came to an end, however, instead of announcing the closing hymn as was his custom, he remained in the pulpit as if he had something to say.

Then came to many what seemed like a bomb-shell.

"My friends," he said. "I have something to say to you of a purely personal nature. I have thought much as to whether I should tell it to you from the pulpit or in the parish magazine, but it has come to me that I ought to tell you here and now."

He hesitated a few seconds after this and seemed to be trying to find the right words to express his thoughts, while

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more than a thousand listeners waited eagerly so as not to miss a word.

“ I have only been here a few months,” he went on, “ but I have decided that I must leave you.”

At this there was a movement in the whole congregation, and there were many who half rose from their seats as if in protest.

“ Pray, do not misunderstand me,” he went on. “ I have nothing but love in my heart for the people among whom I came to labour last Autumn. On the whole, too, no man could have been treated more kindly and more generously than you have treated me. I am devoutly thankful too, because of the success that has attended my work in your midst. Whatever may happen to me or wherever I may go, I shall never forget Gildershaw. I have every reason in the world for remembering it. When I came here, although I had a conventional faith in the teachings of Christ I was not certain of it. Now I am certain. Because Christ has become real to me, I have, according to hundreds of testimonies I have received, made Him real to many of you. For this I shall never cease to be thankful.

“ All the same, it has come to me that I must go away. Where I shall go I do not know, what I shall do I do not know ; but I do know that wherever I go I shall be an ambassador for Christ.

“ ‘ But why go away ? ’ many of you will doubtless ask, and I cannot answer except that it has been borne upon me that I *ought* to go. Thus, as soon as arrangements can be made, another clergyman will be inducted to this parish, another will take the place which I now occupy.”

Again he was silent for a few seconds, and then went on : “ One thing has greatly troubled me ; for that matter, it has hindered my decision. What will become of my work here if I leave the parish ? As I have said, this has sorely troubled me ; but I have at length been led to see and to know that it has

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been God's work, and therefore cannot die. What I have told you from this pulpit since the colliery accident, has been the truth as God has given it me, and because I have been an ambassador for Christ the truth will live, His work will live, and I beseech you all to do everything in your power to keep the lamp of faith burning throughout the coming days."

As we have said, his announcement seemed like a bomb-shell, and when at length the benediction was pronounced, hundreds stood in the churchyard excitedly discussing what he had said.

"Poor lad," exclaimed some, "'ee can't be 'isself, 'ee mun be a bit off his 'ead."

"He can't be that," said others, "think of the sermon he preached. No man could preach a sermon like that unless his mental faculties were all right."

"We mustn't allow him to go," was the determination expressed on every hand. "Why, the Church—the whole town for that matter—has been altogether different during these last few months."

"I tell yo' what it is," exclaimed an old weaver; "it's that Grimshaw lot. They sent a memorial to the bishop and have got him into trouble—that is why he is going to resign."

For the fact of the memorial had leaked out, and many uncomplimentary remarks were made about the petitioners as a consequence.

"Well, he is the grandest lad that ever came to Gildershaw, whatever the Grimshaw lot may say," was the feeling expressed on all hands.

As may be imagined too, many in the congregation besieged David in the vestry that night, and many pleaded with him to give up all thought of resigning.

"Why, Mr. Godolphin," more than one said to him, "you may say what you like, but your leaving would be a calamity to the town, and for my own part I don't believe God will let you go."

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And yet David felt that he must go. Why it was, he could not understand, but it seemed to be borne upon him by some irresistible power that he must say what he had said that night. From one standpoint it seemed utter madness for him to think of leaving, neither could he give a satisfactory reason for taking the step he had taken. As he had told Tamsin Rashleigh, he troubled nothing about the petition which the Grimshaw section of the parish sent to the bishop; neither for that matter was he very much influenced by what the bishop thought or said. As he had declared, the changed condition in the Church and in the town was the real answer to that.

He asked himself again and again whether what Tamsin had said to him had caused him to come to such a momentous decision. That he loved her beyond all words he knew full well, and although the hopelessness of his love was agony to him, it was not that which decided him to leave Gildershaw. He could not explain why, but as hour after hour, and day after day he thought about it, it came to him more and more strongly that he must resign the living.

Of what his mother said to him on his return to the rectory I will be silent. Those who have read this narrative can easily imagine for themselves; but David was adamant in his decision, and determined before the week was over to write both to Tamsin and to the bishop informing them of his resolution. Nevertheless, those letters were never written.

The reason for this may be quickly told. During the past week there had been several cases of illness in the town which had baffled the doctors. At first it had been known only among children, but as the days went by several adults had also been attacked and were, at the time of the service in the parish Church, lying seriously ill. As we have said, the nature of this disease had baffled the doctors. One suggested typhoid, another had thought it to be typhus, while Dr. Bentham was convinced that it was a kind of diphtheria which had mani-

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festated itself in an unknown form. Indeed, the malady, whatever it was, did not have the same symptoms in every case, although of its malignancy there was not the slightest doubt.

On the Monday morning, while it was yet early, a knock came to David's bedroom door.

"Surely it is not time to get up yet," he said to himself as the knock was repeated. "Yes, what is it?" he added aloud.

"Mrs. Beswick is very ill," the servant replied, "and they want you to come and pray with her."

As David, after a hasty breakfast, was making his way to the town a little later, Dr. Bentham's car passed him.

"That you, Godolphin?" he said as he stopped his car.

"Yes," David replied. "I am going to see Mrs. Beswick. What is the meaning of it, doctor? The servant who told me about Mrs. Beswick, also informed me that two people died last night."

The doctor looked grave. "I can't explain it," he said frankly. "We doctors are mystified. We have discussed among ourselves as to what it really means, but I am hanged if we know. We have done our best to allay the people's fears, but to tell you the truth we are absolutely baffled."

"Is it true that two people have died during the night?" David asked.

"I wish there were only two," replied the doctor. "As I said just now, we have done our best to allay the people's fears, but honestly it seems a kind of epidemic."

The doctor's words proved to be true. Before the day was over several other cases were notified, and black terror seized the town.

"Ay, this is ten times waur than t' colliery accident," many declared. "That wur over i' one day, but there seems no end to this."

Never before had such a thing been known. Like other towns, Gildershaw had been visited by epidemics. The older

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people could remember when cholera raged in the town, and again when there was an outbreak of small-pox; but as a knowledge of science became more prevalent, and better sanitation was insisted on, the people had become practically immune from these things. This, however, was altogether different. Try as the doctors might, they could not ascertain the cause of the outbreak, neither could they diagnose the disease with anything like certainty. It manifested itself in different parts of the town too, and almost all were haunted by the fear that they would be the next victims.

Was it owing to bad drainage, foulness in the water, or were malignant germs disseminated by bad milk? No one seemed sure, and although the doctors worked and fought valiantly, many days passed before they began to conquer it.

In the meantime, many deaths took place, and the cemetery bell was constantly tolling.

From the first, none worked harder than David Godolphin. Indeed, it was commonly said that he visited as many sick houses as the doctors themselves. Some had it too, that those who got well owed their recovery more to the young clergyman than to the doctors' medicines. Be that as it may, he was everywhere in demand, and he in no wise spared himself. Morning, noon and night the people sought him, and he was ever obedient to their call. He seemed to have not the slightest fear about his own safety, and strong and vigorous as he was, he seemed to give his strength to others.

Moreover, he was always bright and cheerful, even in the face of death. Indeed, it was here that his victorious faith was most manifested.

"Do not fear," he said again and again to the mourners, "there is no such thing as death; what we call death is only an incident in life. Those to whom you have bidden good-bye for a time are not dead, they are still in God's hands, and He loves them where they are, even as He loved them here."

He made the people feel the truth of his faith, too. He was

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so sure, and so triumphant in his certainty, that he made death less terrible, and caused the bereaved ones to know that Christ and His promises were no figment of the imagination, but a great and wondrous reality.

Thus it came about that the very sight of him walking around the streets brought a feeling like comfort to many lives, while his confidence became contagious.

“Ay, yon’s a grand lad,” exclaimed one to another as they saw him on his missions of mercy. “The very sight on him does me good.”

Indeed it was said that David Godolphin led as many to faith by his visits to the sick and to the sorrowing as he had done by his preaching in the old parish Church. Perhaps, indeed, he had, by the latter, prepared the way for the former. Be that as it may, much as he was loved before the epidemic, he had, by his ministrations in the people’s homes, deepened and strengthened their affection.

More than once during this time he had tried to compose letters both to Tamsin and the bishop, but somehow he was unable to do so. For one thing he was working almost night and day, and had not time at his disposal ; for another it was utterly alien to his nature to think of his resignation while the people’s call for his services was so insistent.

“We are mastering this thing, whatever it is,” he said to himself, as the days went by. “When it is over I will send in my resignation.”

Then, when the doctors began to believe that the epidemic was over, and people went about their work with less fear in their eyes, the man they had learnt to love and to trust was himself stricken down. He had spent the whole of the day in going among the people, and then on his return home he had thrown himself into his chair with a sigh of contentment, thinking that the labours of the day were over, when the pains common to the disease gripped him. An hour afterwards, Dr. Bentham stood by his side with a grave look on his

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face. "He has got it," he said to himself, "and has got it badly."

Before the night was over, practically the whole town knew that the young clergyman had fallen a victim to the thing against which he had fought so hard.

During the days that followed, the rectory was besieged with inquirers. "Is he any better? What does the doctor say?" the people asked eagerly, and then turned away with sad hearts when no good news was forthcoming.

People who had not prayed for years began to pray now, and rough, godless men who had given up all idea of religion began to think seriously. Groups of colliers met in the streets, and instead of discussing the racing news or the latest prize fight, they talked about the young rector's chances of recovery.

"If God A'mighty lets yon chap die, He will mak' a big mistak'," said one rough Yorkshireman to a number of others who stood talking.

"Ay, he is a grand lad," another said. "'Ast 'a 'eerd him preach, Bill?"

"Nay, but I 'eerd what he said when he came to visit our Nellie. Tell tha' what, he made me believe in God in spite of mysen."

"I 'ear as 'ow the Grimshaw lot are trying to kick him o't the parish," said another.

At this many savage oaths were uttered.

"We ca'an't afford to lose yon chap," these rough men said. "If he geets well we mun keep him, Grimshaws or no Grimshaws."

"I 'eerd as 'ow Dr. Bentham thinks there is no 'ope," one ventured.

"There *mun* be 'ope!" exclaimed a rough collier. "I am nobbut a poor 'and at praying, but I am going to 'ave a try at it for that lad."

This conversation was suggestive of what went on all over the town. It was not because David was a *great* man that they

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loved him, but because he was a *real* man, and he had been absolutely honest and sincere with them.

"I tell tha' what, Elijah," said one weaver to another, as they made their way along the Gildershaw streets one night, "that chap has made me think more of Christ than any parson I ever 'eerd afore. I am a Primitive Methodist myself, and have never thought much of Church parsons, but he is the real thing. Christianity is not a mak-believe with him."

"I 'ear that the doctors have given up 'ope," replied the other.

"Elijah," exclaimed the first speaker, "do you remember what they said about Christ when He hung upon the Cross? They said, 'He saved others, Himself He cannot save'. That is true of Godolphin; he needn't have gone to all the sick houses he has gone to; he could have stayed at home and smoked his pipe. By gum, we can say of him if he dies, 'he saved others, himself he *would* not save'."

One night, as an inquirer made his way to the rectory for news, he saw Dr. Bentham motoring towards the rectory gates. The man motioned the doctor to stop.

"How is he, doctor?"

But the doctor did not reply.

"Is he worse?"

Still the doctor did not reply, but the inquirer saw his lips tremble.

"You don't mean to say he is dead?"

Again the doctor refused to utter a word; instead, he passed quickly through the rectory gates and a turning in the lane outside hid him from view.

That night it was given out in the town that David Godolphin was dead.

CHAPTER XXV

THE GILDERSHAW GAZETTE

TAMSIN RASHLEIGH sat alone in her old home. Almost immediately after David's last visit there she had gone away from Wentworth Hall to visit some friends, and now she had returned home. Her friends had urged her to stay with them longer, but Tamsin had refused their appeals.

Tamsin was in no amiable frame of mind. She remembered Dick Grimshaw's threat on the afternoon of the bishop's visit to her. She called to mind, too, the look on his face when he had made the threat, and although every fibre of her being revolted against the thought of being the subject of scandalous gossip, a kind of instinct told her that she ought not to be out of the town when that threat was fulfilled.

For she had no doubt about it being fulfilled. She knew Dick Grimshaw ; knew his revengeful nature ; knew that it was part of his creed never to allow a debt to go unpaid. Had she been a weak woman she would have stayed away until the gossip of foul tongues had died down, but being what she was, she came back, as she told herself, to face the music.

There was another thing which led her to return. News had come to her of the Gildershaw epidemic, and of the work David Godolphin was doing in the town. She had immediately instructed her steward to render what help he was able so far as the sick were concerned, but she saw no reason for returning herself. When the news reached her that David had been taken ill, however, she could no longer stay away.

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Thus it came about that she sat alone at Wentworth Hall. Before long a knock came to the door, and Pilkington, the butler, appeared.

"Yes, what is it?" she asked of the old man.

"Please, Miss Tamsin," replied the butler, who had known her from childhood, "Mr. Grimshaw is at the door. He says he very much wishes to see you."

"I told you to tell Mr. Grimshaw that he would not be admitted here," was her reply.

"Yes, I know, Miss Tamsin, and I have not admitted him; but he said he should not go away until he had seen you. What was more, he gave me this letter."

The girl hesitated a second. Should she tell Pilkington to take back the letter which lay on the tray he held in his hand, or should she read it? Had she acted according to the dictates of her pride and self-will she would have done the former; on the other hand, she did not want to do anything that would shut the door against the hope, which in spite of herself she cherished, that something would happen to keep Dick from carrying out his threat.

Almost involuntarily she took the letter, and read it.

I am a man of my word, but at the same time I am anxious to avoid a permanent rupture between us. You insulted me the last time I saw you; nevertheless, because I love you I am taking this step. In fact, no sooner did I hear of your return this afternoon than I made up my mind. There is another thing too. The news which has come from the Rectory to-night is of such a nature as to make me think that I see a way out of the *impasse* which seems to lie between us.

I am writing this letter at the mill, and shall give it to the butler who in my hearing you instructed not to admit me into the house. I am trying to write coherently although I find it difficult to do so; perhaps you will understand. But

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for my hopes that you will be reasonable I shouldn't have waited so long.

RICHARD GRIMSHAW.

It was not a well-written letter, but Tamsin thought she understood the reason for this. Dick was wrought up as he wrote, and had difficulty in finding words to express his meaning. There was one thing in the letter, moreover, which decided her to admit him ; it was the reference to the rectory. What was the news of the rectory of which he spoke ? Since her return she had inquired of Pilkington concerning the sickness there had been in the town, and although he did not seem very clear on the matter, she gathered that David was reported to be better. What, then, did Dick mean by this sentence ?

Without realizing what she was doing she ordered the butler to show Mr. Grimshaw in.

Dick evidently regarded this as a sign of weakening on Tamsin's part. He came into the room with an almost jaunty step, and a look of confidence in his eyes. One glance at Tamsin, however, made him less certain. Her pale face, and the hard look in her eyes made him realize that there was no sign of yielding on her part.

"Thank you for seeing me," he managed to say. "I am glad you have given up your foolishness."

"What do you wish to say to me ?" asked the girl, quietly.

"The month is up to-day," he replied.

"What month ?" she asked, as though she did not understand him.

"You know very well," and his under jaw became more prominent. "I had a difficulty in waiting so long, but I have stuck to my word. It has been no easy matter, I can tell you. I have my pride the same as you, and when I have been asked again and again whether it was true you had ordered me from the house, I found it difficult to keep quiet. However, I have made arrangements with Dixon to keep a space in the *Gazette*

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for me on Friday in case you are unreasonable. Come now, there is no reason why we should be at daggers drawn any longer ; let's make it up and be friends. I have got my way in one thing, anyhow," he added.

" In what way ? " she asked.

" It seems that I was a little premature in what I hinted about the news from the rectory, but whether he gets well or not it will make no difference."

" What news from the rectory ? " she managed to ask.

" Don't you know ? A report got around the town this afternoon that Godolphin was dead, but it seems he isn't. I suppose he is not likely to recover, but he is still alive. Perhaps you haven't heard about it, but it makes no difference. He announced a month ago that he had decided to leave, so he will be no longer here to turn you against me."

For some seconds Tamsin was unable to speak. Dick's news had been such a shock that she was scarcely able to think connectedly ; but she gave no sign of what she was feeling. To Dick she appeared so calm and collected that the very suggestion of her being troubled about the young rector seemed foolish.

" Come now, Tammy," he went on, " let bygones be bygones, and let us make a fresh start. You withdraw what you said, and no one shall know of that letter."

" What have I said ? " and she spoke like one who did not realize that the words had passed her lips.

" Say that you will marry me," urged Dick. " Everything is summed up in that. It will be an answer to everything."

" Is that what you came for ? " she asked.

" I wanted to give you another chance," he replied. " I meant to do that when I was here last time. I hated the idea of——"

The look on Tamsin's face froze the words on his lips, and made him incapable of pleading further. Perhaps this was no wonder. Never had she felt such a loathing for the young

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man as she felt then. Although she had made no sign, her heart was torn with anguish for David Godolphin. Was it true that he was ill, past recovery? Could it be possible that he might even now be lying dead at the rectory? The thought was almost unbearable. Thus, when she heard Dick Grimshaw not only talking callously about his death, but in the same breath pleading with her to marry him, it caused such a revulsion in her heart as almost to make her lose control over herself. Her mind, torn with anguish as it was, fastened upon the words David had said to her, and when she remembered that but for her madness she might have given him a different answer, horror and loathing wellnigh mastered her.

"Is that all you wish to say?" It did not sound like Tamsin's voice at all.

Grimshaw did not reply. The words he would have said refused to be uttered.

"If that is all you have to say will you kindly leave me," she went on. "Of course what you suggest is impossible." Then, wanting to make him feel that she despised his threats, she added, "I should as soon think of marrying my chauffeur."

"Do you mean that?"

"I think you know your way out, Mr. Grimshaw," she replied. "If you don't, I will ring for a servant."

"All right, Miss Tamsin Rashleigh," and Dick's voice was hoarse with rage. "In half an hour from now that letter shall be in the hands of Dixon, the editor of the *Gildershaw Gazette*, and he shall have a full account of the Scarborough episode, too. On Friday morning everybody shall be talking about it. What do you say to that?"

Without a word Tamsin went to the bell-push. "Pilkington," she said, "will you kindly show Mr. Grimshaw to the door, and will you also remember that what I said concerning him when he was here last still holds good."

She stood waiting until she heard the front door close and

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the roll of Dick's car on the gravel outside. Then, throwing herself into a chair, she sat white-lipped and dry-eyed, staring into vacancy.

As for Dick Grimshaw, he drove towards the town in a mad rage. He realized that the proud boast of the family concerning the Grimshaws always getting what they wanted was not true in this case. "And that's that," he muttered with an angry oath. "I was a mad fool to see her again, but I thought——"

He did not check the speed of his car until he reached a building in one of the less frequented streets of the town. Leaving the car at the door, he entered, and made his way up some rickety steps to an upper floor. Here he found a youngish and somewhat worried-looking man seated before a table covered with papers.

"Dixon," he said. "You remember what I said to you an hour or two ago?"

"Yes, Mr. Grimshaw."

"Have you saved that space I told you about?"

The man nodded in the affirmative.

Dick took a letter case from his pocket and from it he extracted some papers. "I want this printed in bold type to appear in that space," and he spoke like one giving a command.

"It's the leader page," remarked the other, unfolding the papers.

"That is where I want it to appear," replied Dick.

Levi Dixon read for more than a minute in silence, then a strange look came into his eyes.

"You want this to appear in our next issue, Mr. Grimshaw?" he asked.

"I want everyone to read it on Friday morning," replied Dick.

"And who will be held responsible in case of trouble?" asked the man.

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"You will, of course. You are the editor."

"And who is to prove it isn't a forgery?"

"I have the letter in her own handwriting," was the reply.

"That which I have given you is a correct copy, the original I shall keep for safety. As for the rest; every word of it is true. You needn't fear, you will not be dragged up for libel. She will take good care not to stir up muddy water."

Dixon read the papers through the second time.

"I don't like it," he said presently. "I would rather not do it."

"You will have to do it," replied Dick truculently.

"And if I refuse?" the other said with a show of spirit.

"What then?"

"This," replied Dick, and there was a suggestion of conscious power in his voice. "I have three of your I O U's for nearly £300 which you owe me. There are also several doctors' bills which I have promised to pay, but which I shall not pay if you don't do as I tell you; while your house and furniture are mortgaged to me for more than they are worth. Need I say any more?"

The man shrank away from Grimshaw as though he were struck.

"I will do what you say, Mr. Grimshaw," he said presently.

"I thought you would," replied Dick. "Now listen," and he gave him instructions. "Mind, not a word regarding the part I have taken in this must appear."

"But everybody will know," replied the other.

"Let them know," Dick almost shouted, with an oath.

"It will show them that I am not a man to be played with."

Then he left the editor to his thoughts.

* * * *

The servants at Wentworth Hall all went to their rooms at the usual time that night, but Tamsin Rashleigh continued to sit alone where Dick Grimshaw had left her, with the same

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vacant look in her eyes, the same deathly pallor on her cheeks. What she was thinking about I will not try to describe.

After the house had been silent for some time, she made her way to the telephone and asked the exchange for a certain number.

"Is Dr. Bentham in the house?" she asked, presently.

"This is Dr. Bentham," was the reply. "Who's speaking? Oh yes, Miss Rashleigh," he went on when she had told him. "What can I do for you?"

"I have only come back here to-day after being away nearly a month," she told him, "and know practically nothing about the illness you have had in the town. Is what I hear about the rector true?"

"He is very ill," the doctor replied.

"Will he recover?"

"I am doubtful about that," was the reply. He went on to tell her that the epidemic as far as the town was concerned was practically conquered, but the rector's condition gave him great anxiety. "It is an awful business," he concluded, "no man worked in the town harder than he, and no one did a tithe of the good; then, when we thought all was practically over, the man whose life is worth the lives of more than any dozen of us was stricken down himself. A day or two ago I thought he would recover, but now I have my doubts."

"Why?" asked Tamsin.

"I don't believe he wants to get better," replied the doctor. "He has no fever, and the malady has no longer any grip on him; but he does not seem to care whether he gets better or not. Of course, you have heard that he announced his intention of leaving Gildershaw some weeks ago. I sometimes think that is why he doesn't want to live."

"Has he lost interest in the town, then?" she asked.

"No," replied the doctor. "That is all he seems to care for."

She had barely finished her conversation with the doctor

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and returned to the room where she had been sitting, when she heard footsteps on the gravel outside. This was followed by some taps on the windowpane.

"I wonder who that can be?" thought Tamsin. "Who can want to see me at this time of the night?" Then guessing, although she dared not hope that it could be so, that it might be someone bringing news from the rectory, she rushed to the front door and opened it.

"Is that Miss Rashleigh?" said a voice.

"Yes. Who are you? What do you want?"

"Thank God you are not gone to bed."

"Who are you?"

The nocturnal visitor, whoever it might be, made his way from the window to the front door.

"Can I speak to you a few minutes, Miss Rashleigh?"

"I think I know you, don't I?" she asked.

"Yes, I think you know me. You came to see my wife when she was ill, while more than once you have taken my children for a drive in your car."

"Oh yes, I remember now. You are Mr. Dixon. What can I do for you?"

"I want half an hour's talk with you," replied the man.

"It is very important; otherwise I shouldn't have come here at this time of the night. I don't want anyone to know I have been here," he added, "I will tell you why if you will let me come in."

Tamsin led the way into the house, and presently opened the door of the room where she had been sitting.

"Now what is it?" she asked.

For answer the man took from his pocket a packet of papers, and placed it before her. "Will you please read those, Miss Rashleigh," he said.

The girl read them without a word, and even as she read she could not help admitting the devilish cleverness with which the papers were arranged, or the ghastly construction placed

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upon a madcap girl's innocent but foolish actions. Tamsin writhed as she read.

"You know from whom these came?" Levi Dixon asked.

"Yes. Why have you brought them to me?"

"I thought you ought to know what was going on," replied Dixon. "It is right that you should. He brought them to me to-night. To-day is Wednesday, and we go to press to-morrow. Aren't you going to do anything to stop it?"

"What can I do?"

"But, Miss Rashleigh, think what it means! There are evil-minded people in the town, and when this appears on Friday morning—Can't you do anything?" he added.

"Evidently he has got some hold upon you, and is using this as a sort of blackmail. Can't you do what he wants? By God! this will be terrible if it appears!"

"No, I can't do anything," she replied, after a long silence. "Better *that*—than what he wants."

"I can't help myself," Dixon said hoarsely. "If I were the only one to be thought of I would tell him plainly that I wouldn't do his dirty work!—but I have a wife and four little children—and he has me in his power. I owe him hundreds of pounds, too, and he has a mortgage on my house and furniture. I wouldn't mind starving myself, but I can't see the wife and children starving. You see, my bread and butter depends on him."

A minute later Tamsin Rashleigh was in the throes of a great temptation. She believed she saw why the man had come to her. He was, as Dick Grimshaw had told her, his tool, his chattel; he owed his bread to the young manufacturer. Moreover, by his own confession he was in debt to Dick Grimshaw, who had doubtless threatened him with all sorts of things if he did not obey him. Dixon was not a bad man, and doubtless he hated the thought of doing Grimshaw's will; but he was weak, and he feared for the future. Even then, she could fancy him yielding to Grimshaw's bulldog strength.

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She believed, too, that the editor of the *Gildershaw Gazette* had come to her in the hope that she would do something to avert what she would regard as a ghastly calamity. Perhaps she would be only too glad to get him out of Grimshaw's clutches.

Well, why not? She was a rich woman, and she could easily buy this man. By promising to pay his debts, and to care for his future, he could be persuaded to refuse to print these ghastly documents. If they did not appear on the following Friday a week would elapse before the next issue of the paper, and that would give her time to act.

She felt as though she would do anything to delay the publication. She remembered what Dr. Bentham had told her about David Godolphin. Ill as he was, he was still interested in the life of the town, and of course he would hear of this scandalous story. Perhaps——

But no, she couldn't! Her whole nature revolted against such an act. It would be unworthy of the name she bore. Besides, by so doing, she, Tamsin Rashleigh, would be placing herself on a level with Dick Grimshaw; and putting herself in the power of the man Dixon.

"What can I do, Miss Rashleigh?" he almost whined. "If I don't obey him I shall be kicked into the streets, and I shall be without a job."

"I have nothing to say," Tamsin replied.

"Then you will let me print this?"

"I have nothing to say," she repeated.

"And you will take no steps to stop it? Why, think! Your name will be on everybody's tongue, and—and—it isn't as though it were true. I am sure it isn't; or at least not in the way he puts it; but hundreds and thousands will believe it is. It will be copied in every paper in Yorkshire too."

"Let it be copied," and the girl's eyes flashed fiercely. "If you choose to be Mr. Grimshaw's tool you must be. I shall do nothing."

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"It isn't as though it *were* true," repeated the man, looking at the girl curiously.

"No, it is not true!" cried the girl angrily. "The letter was written as a mad joke. As for the rest—But there, I will not discuss it. Thank you for coming Mr. Dixon, but I can do nothing. Good night," and she held out her hand as she spoke.

"If it hadn't been for the wife and kids," Dixon protested as he went towards the door. "You won't tell Grimshaw I have been here, will you?"

"I shall have no communication with him of any sort," she replied.

"She is a grand young lady," reflected Dixon as he trudged down the drive, "and if it hadn't been for what I owe him I would throw these dirty papers in his face before I'd do what he says, but there——"

CHAPTER XXVI

TAMSIN AT THE RECTORY

EARLY the following morning Tamsin had another conversation with Dr. Bentham, and then, directly after breakfast, she got into her car and drove to the Gildershaw Rectory. When she arrived she saw to her satisfaction that the doctor's car was already there.

"I came to inquire how the rector is," she said to the maid who appeared at the door.

The girl curtsied as she saw who the visitor was. "I hear he has had a better night," she managed to say, "but I don't know anything for certain. Dr. Bentham is with him now."

Tamsin did not appear surprised at the doctor's early visit, indeed, this might have been arranged.

"I will come in, if I may, and wait until the doctor comes down," she said to the girl.

"Certainly, Miss Rashleigh. Will you come this way? I am sorry Mrs. Godolphin is not here, but Dr. Bentham said she must stay in bed this morning, and on no account be disturbed."

In spite of her anxiety Tamsin smiled at this, and a warm feeling came into her heart for the doctor.

A minute later Dr. Bentham appeared in the room.

"I am afraid I am a good deal of a fool," he exclaimed. "I ought not to have consented when you made such a mad proposal, but after all, it may do him no harm. He has had a good night, and although he is weak—Come this way," he added in a whisper, and he looked as guilty as a boy who had

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been stealing apples. "I will take you to him, and keep the nurse out of the room for a quarter of an hour; but you mustn't excite him. Mind that!"

David Godolphin was lying with closed eyes as the girl entered. He appeared to have fallen asleep, and Tamsin's footsteps were so light that her entrance did not disturb him. For nearly a minute she stood watching him, while he lay breathing quietly.

Presently he opened his eyes and saw who his visitor was.

"It wasn't a dream after all," he said. "I was dreaming that you were here. Is anything the matter?" and an anxious look came into his eyes.

"I had great difficulty in persuading the doctor to let me see you," she began. "I have something to tell you; something I very much want you to hear. You are sure you are strong enough?" she asked anxiously.

He looked at her for a few seconds without speaking. "Yes, I am sure I am strong enough," he replied. "I feel strong enough for anything, now you are here," and he continued to look at her wonderingly. "What can I do for you? Are you in trouble?"

"Oh, it's a shame for me to bother you!" cried the girl, "only——"

"Shame!—If you only knew how glad I am to see you! There, tell me what you have to say." He seemed to regard her visit as the most natural thing in the world. He might have been expecting her.

"It is this way," she went on, and rapidly she outlined what I have tried to describe in these pages. She told him how, before his coming to Gildershaw, she was restless, and that her whole nature clamoured for excitement and pleasure; told him, too, how she had been led to get friendly with Dick Grimshaw, of the letter she had written him, and of what followed.

"And that is all?" he asked at length.

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"That is all," she replied. "It is ghastly, isn't it?"

He did not seem at all surprised at her narrative, but lay quiet.

"Why have you told *me* this?" he asked at length.

"Because I was sure you would get to know of it through the paper to-morrow morning. The doctor told me that ever since the fever you were, although awfully weak, greatly interested in the doings of the town; and I couldn't bear the thought that you should learn of this ghastly thing through the newspaper, until——"

"Until what?" he asked eagerly.

"Until I told you the exact truth. I hated for you to think of me in such a way, for there was nothing in it. I was just a silly madcap girl. That was all; and——"

"Stop," he protested almost indignantly. "As though I could believe anything else! Wait a minute, will you? I want to think."

His face was as pale as death, but his eyes which were fixed on a distant part of the room had a wonderful brightness in them. "Why were you so anxious that *I* should know first?" and there was a tremor in his voice.

"Because I did not want you to think of me in such a way. I have loathed myself ever since I wrote that letter, loathed myself for allowing him to be even friendly."

"Why?" asked David.

"It is ghastly," the girl cried, "and after last night I determined to tell you."

"But *why* did you determine to tell *me*?" he persisted.

"Am I not the patroness of the living?" she evaded.

"Was that the reason?" he asked. "The *real* reason? Look me straight in the eyes; that's it, straight in the eyes. Was that the *real* reason, Tamsin?"

"No—David," the words came out with a sob.

Weak as he was he lifted himself up in the bed, and looked at her eagerly.

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“Do you mean that, Tamsin ; do you really mean it ? ”

For answer she leaned forward and kissed him. “I knew it directly after you left—that night. It came to me suddenly, and then—Oh David!—the doctor is coming ! ”

The doctor did not enter the room immediately, some sort of instinct told him that he ought to talk with the nurse outside the door for a minute before entering. When he appeared Tamsin was sitting demurely by the bedside.

“I have given you nearer half an hour than a quarter,” he remarked as he entered the room. “You have not excited my patient, have you ? ”

“She jolly well has ! ” David answered for her.

“But you are none the worse for it are you ? ”

“Worse ! ” the young rector replied. “Miss Rashleigh is a far better doctor than you are.”

“Anyhow, you must go now, young lady,” commanded Dr. Bentham as he turned to Tamsin. “You have been here quite long enough. Rather too long, I am inclined to think ; but there, I don’t think there is any harm done.”

“Doctor,” cried David, and there was a joyous tone in his voice, “there is just another word I want to say to Miss Rashleigh before she goes. I want to say it in private too.”

The doctor gave them both a quick glance. “Mind, it must be only a minute,” he said as he again left the room.

CHAPTER XXVII

BILL BIRTWHISTLE'S IDEA

“PLEASE don't make any excuses. I am delighted to see you, simply delighted. I heard that you had gone away to visit some friends. When did you get back?” and the bishop looked smilingly at the young girl who had been ushered into his study.

“I only got back yesterday afternoon,” replied Tamsin.

“And you have come to visit me the first day after your return? Well, that is kind, and it's a real pleasure to see you. I have been terribly grieved to hear of the fearful epidemic there has been in Gildershaw, and am thankful to know that the ghastly thing has been practically conquered. Do you know how Godolphin is?” he added. “It is terribly hard on him to be stricken down in such a way after having worked so valiantly.”

“I was told this morning that he was better,” she managed to say.

“That's splendid! I *do* hope he will pull through. Do you remember my last visit to you, my child?”

“I am not likely to forget it,” replied the girl.

“No, perhaps not. I was sorry to be obliged to take the step I did, but I could not help myself. However, I fulfilled my promise to you. Directly I left you that day I sent my chaplain to make inquiries into the whole business, and I must confess, his report confirmed in almost every particular what you told me. Godolphin has gained a wonderful grip on the town,—simply wonderful. Indeed, it seemed almost miracu-

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lous, and I began to make my plans accordingly. Then, to my astonishment, I heard that he had announced from the pulpit his intention to resign. Indeed, I was on the point of writing to him about it when this fearful epidemic broke out, and I have done nothing since. Did you come to see me about this ? ” he added.

“ In a way,” replied Tamsin. “ Bishop, I want your advice badly, perhaps I shall want your help too.”

The old prelate looked at her scrutinizingly. Never before had Tamsin approached him in such a fashion, and he wondered what was in her mind. “ Any help I can give you shall be yours, my child. What is it ? ”

Thereupon she told him the story she had told David Godolphin that morning, related to him her mad hunger for excitement, her foolish friendship with Dick Grimshaw ; described the letter she had written to him, and told him how ever since he had used it as a weapon against her.

It was a hard confession to make, and to the proud girl it was almost agony to answer the questions he put to her.

“ And that is all ? ” he asked at length.

“ No, it is not all,” she replied. “ This morning I went to the rectory, and told Mr. Godolphin what I have told you.”

“ Told Godolphin ! I heard he was too ill to see anyone.”

“ I had to fight hard with Dr. Bentham in order to get his permission to see him. Perhaps it was wrong of me to do so, but I could not help myself.”

“ Why ? ” asked the bishop.

The girl became crimson, and found it difficult to speak. “ Because I wanted to tell him the truth with my own lips before it became public property,” she managed to say at length.

Again the bishop looked at her keenly. In many ways he was a wise old man, and saw far into the heart of things.

“ Is it that, Tamsin, my child ? ” he asked.

“ I love him,” she replied, and there was a proud tone in

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her voice. "He loves me, too, and how could I allow him to learn of such a thing through the papers, while I? . . . But he didn't seem to care a bit; in fact he laughed at it this morning. But oh! can *nothing* be done?"

The bishop asked other questions, after which he sat seemingly deep in thought.

"That man Dixon wanted you to buy him," he said after a time. "That was why he came to you."

"How could I?" exclaimed the girl. "Better disgrace—better *anything* than that!"

"Perhaps you are right," the bishop replied. Then he rang for his secretary. "Find the telephone number of the *Gildershaw Gazette*," he ordered, "and let me know immediately."

A minute later he went out, leaving Tamsin alone. When he returned there was a bright look in his eyes. "Don't trouble that dear little head of yours any more," he said with a laugh. "Nothing will appear to trouble you in the *Gildershaw Gazette* to-morrow; not a line, not a word," and he laughed again. "A bishop has some influence, even in these democratic days, and I will take the full responsibility upon myself for everything."

It was some seconds before the girl grasped the full meaning of his words, then it seemed to her as though a mountain of misery and suspense were rolled from her shoulders.

"Oh, Bishop, you *dear*!" she cried, as she rushed to him and kissed him. "How can I ever thank you for it?"

"By just saying nothing, my child," replied the old man, "and not troubling one little bit. I am glad I was in time," he added. "The editor was keeping everything back as long as he could, in the hope, I suppose, that something would turn up. Anyhow, he had not yet handed the foul stuff to the printers, so none of them know anything. As for Grimshaw, I'll deal with him."

As a little later Tamsin drove her two-seater car towards

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her old home her heart was singing for joy. Summer was now fast passing away, but the skies overhead were clear, and there seemed nothing but brightness in her heart. "Oh I am glad that I told him!" she said, again and again. "Glad that he knows everything. The bishop said that if I *had* come to him direct there would have been no need for David to know anything, but I am glad I told him. There must be no secrets between us."

She had had no lunch; she didn't want any. Her heart was too full of joy to care for such things, and directly she arrived at Gildershaw, instead of turning in at her own gate she drove straight to Dr. Bentham's house.

"I want to see Mr. Godolphin again this afternoon," she informed the doctor.

"What, *again*! Why, in heaven's name?" exclaimed the gruff old man.

"Never mind, I do. He is none the worse for seeing me this morning, is he?"

"Worse!" answered the other, and then he hesitated. "I took such a risk in letting you see him," he went on, "that I got awfully anxious; anyhow, half an hour ago I paid him another visit."

"Was he worse?" asked Tamsin, eagerly scanning his face.

"Worse! He was a hundred per cent. better. But mind, you mustn't go till four o'clock, I want him to sleep till then."

After that Tamsin drove back to the Hall, and ate ravenously.

The next day it was known in the town that the rector was out of danger, and was making marvellous strides towards recovery. It was also rumoured that the lady of the manor had been to see him more than once, and that it was from the hour of her first visit that his recovery took place.

"Thank the Lord for that," one said to another. "He will never think of going away now. Anyhow, we'll noan let him go."

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No sooner was it known in the town that the rector was on the road to recovery than the feeling was expressed on all hands that something must be done. What, no one seemed quite sure, but something.

"I know," said a rough collier, Bill Birtwhistle by name, "we mun tell him that we luv him—ay I main it—and that he mun noan think of laivin' Gildershaw. 'E's the grandest lad ever put foot i' the town, and we mun tell 'im soa."

"But 'ow can we do it?"

"I knaw," replied Bill emphatically, "yo laive it to me."

Half an hour later Bill paid a visit to the rector's warden, who having heard what he had to say, immediately went to see the people's warden.

"By gum," exclaimed that gentleman, "it's a grand idea. It must be carried out at once, Micah."

The next day but one, at every house in the parish a circular letter was delivered which stated that on the following Saturday night a public meeting would be held in the Town Hall in order to express the feelings of the inhabitants about the rector and his recovery.

It was not a very well-expressed document. Many of the sentences lacked literary polish, and suggested the fact that it was the work of several hands. But it had the desired effect. Half an hour before the time announced the huge building was besieged by a crowd such as had never been seen there before. Nearly all classes of the community were present, and it was declared that at no political meeting, belonging to whatever party, had such enthusiasm been witnessed.

The rector's warden took the chair, while on the platform was a crowd of people, some of whom had been looked upon as a disgrace to the town.

I will not try to reproduce all the speeches that were given. Such a feat would be far beyond my powers. Nevertheless

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there were two of which I must make special mention. One was by Bill Birtwhistle who was in a very real sense the originator of the gathering.

Bill as we have said was a rough collier. For many years he had been regarded as one of the worst men in the town. Strong as a horse, he was a terrible fighter, and when under the influence of drink, which was not seldom, was more devil than man. As a consequence he was the terror of his neighbours and was generally avoided. Nevertheless he was a man of strong personality and possessed all that "gumption" for which Yorkshire and Lancashire are noted.

How he became interested in David Godolphin, or how the young rector brought about a change in his life, it would take too long to tell. He had never been known to enter a church till David came to the town, and had, as he frequently declared, "nowt to do wi' parsons of ony sort," but he had gone to the service immediately after the colliery accident, and had been arrested by what he heard. Then when David met him afterwards he found him willing to talk, and by and by a change came over Bill's life.

"We've had several speeches," the rector's warden said, after the meeting had continued about an hour, "and some of them have been rare and good. I've seen to it, too, that every speech has been taken down in shorthand, and that every one of them shall be sent to the rector. But there's one man you haven't heard, whom you ought to hear, and that's the man who first suggested this meeting. His name is Mr. William Birtwhistle who I will now call to address you."

There was much cheering when the rough collier rose and went to the front of the platform. Hundreds knew him, and all wondered what he would say.

"First of all, Mester Warburton," and the speaker turned to the chairman, "I'm noan Mester. I'm Bill Birtwhistle. Weeks ago people called me 'druffen (drunken) Bill.' But I've gived up t' drink, so that they doan't ca' me that naa,

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Ay"—this to the audience,—“ I am as you may say responsible for this meetin'. I'll tell yo' why. When we 'eerd as 'ow the rector was gettin' better we wanted to let off steam. We wanted to tell him as 'ow we luvd 'im, and that we wur noan baan to let 'im laive us. But 'ow could we do it? Some said one thing and some another; then I think on a plan. That's why we are 'ere to-night. I tell yo', Mester Godolphin is a grand chap.” (Great cheers). “ He's done more for Gildershaw than any chap as 'as ever lived 'ere. (Continued cheers). Wy, 'ee's made religion a real thing to many on us, and I wanted to let 'im knaw it. I'm sayin' this because I 'ear as 'ow a lot of people 'ave got up a petition to the bishop askin' him to get Mr. Godolphin out of the parish. Look 'ere, yo chaps, can we stand that? (Loud shouts of No.) That's it. Gi't tongue! More nor that, if Mr. Godolphin tries to laive Gildershaw, I want this meeting to tell him that we shall tak' 'im by t' scruff o't' neck and stop him! (More cheering). People are sayin' as 'ow the workin' man is noan religious. It's a — lie!! But we mun 'ave the rail thing! And our rector has gi'en us the rail thing, 'cos 'ee's got the rail thing hissen.

“ Well we mun tell 'im soa! (Great cheering).

“ Ay, it's all varry well to cheer, but 'ow shall we do it? That's why I'm goin' to propose a proposition. And it's this; We've drawed up a paper tellin' 'im 'ow we luv him, and that we are noan baan to let him laive us. It's right there on t' table afore t' Chairman. And I propose that everybody as wants to shall sign it to-night, and after that I propose that it be put in t' parish 'All, so that anybody as cudden geet 'ere to-night shall a' the chance of signing it. Wot do yo say? (Tremendous applause.)

“ Ther's only wawn thing more as I'm goin' to say. We mun mak Mr. Godolphin a presentation.—Is that the right word, Mester Chairman?—So I propose that we gi' 'im a moty-car, so that when 'ee goes round visitin', he may say to 'issen, this

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thing was guv me by the people wot do luv me.—Ay an we *do* luv 'im an' a'—And look 'ere, I'm only a poor workin' collier, but you may put me daan for a week's wage to 'elp pay for it. I'd gi' a 'underd paand ef I could, fur—fur—yon chap wot's naa geet'n better—thank the Loard, 'as been like Jesus Christ to me."

Bill made several attempts to continue, but sobs choked his voice. All he could do was to say in a hoarse voice, "God bless Mester Godolphin!"

To say that Bill's proposition was unanimously supported, would be mildly to hint at the truth. Indeed several minutes passed before the Chairman could command anything like silence.

But the greatest sensation was yet to come.

No sooner could the rector's warden get the attention of the people, than he made another announcement.

"My friends," he said, "I've just learnt that the patroness of the living, Miss Tamsin Rashleigh, is in the hall. I'm sure all of you would like a few words from her."

Immediately there was another outburst, and when at length Tamsin stepped on to the platform she was met with a sight such as she had never witnessed before.

"My friends," she began, "this is the first time I ever tried to make a speech in public; probably it'll be the last, but I couldn't keep silent when the Chairman asked me to speak. I am going to tell you something. It was through me Mr. Godolphin came to Gildershaw. I'm thankful he came. Before he came, religion was an empty word to me. It isn't now. Mr. Godolphin has made it a great reality to me!

"I'm going to tell you something else. It's a great secret—a *tremendous* secret! If your rector stays, and I'm going to do my best to persuade him to stay, there is going to be a curious problem to settle. It is this: Will Mr. Godolphin come to live at the Hall, or shall I go to live at the rectory? For it's going to be one or the other."

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The sensation caused by Tamsin's speech is the talk of Gildershaw even to this day.

Ten days later David Godolphin sat in his study at the rectory. He was still weak, and still showed signs of the disease which had so ravaged the town. Nevertheless, strength was slowly coming back to him, and health proclaimed itself on his cheeks. Near him sat Nick Trebartha and Naomi.

"This is splendid, old man," exclaimed Nick. "To see you like this after all our fears about you is a foretaste of Heaven. Is all we have heard about you true, David?"

"It depends what you have heard," was the reply.

"Oh, we have been told all sorts of things," laughed Naomi. "Of course, we knew of the glorious work you have been doing in the parish, and we weren't a bit surprised at it. After hearing what you told us that Sunday night, we were sure the rest would follow."

A far-away look came into David's eyes. He was thinking of his early days in the town, and of the great secret he had learnt. "Things haven't turned out a bit as I expected," he said, "but the world is different to me from what it was the first day I came here. All the same, it isn't a matter to talk about, is it?"

"Perhaps it isn't," replied Nick, "but is the rest true?"

"What is the rest?" asked David with a laugh.

"Oh, that a section of the town tried to drive you out of the parish, and that the bishop did his best to persuade you to leave. Is that true?"

"The bishop doesn't see eye to eye with me yet," replied David. "He is still a sacerdotalist, while I—well you know what I am. Still, he has a broader mind than I thought, and he has a big heart, too. I had a beautiful letter from him only yesterday."

"But was there a petition sent to him asking him to persuade you to leave?" asked Naomi.

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“Don’t let’s talk about that,” replied the young rector. “Look at that petition against the wall,” and he nodded towards a great roll of paper. “Unknown to me the people of the parish drew up a memorial urging me to stay. It lay in the church-house for more than a week, and people were told they could come there to sign it if they wished.”

“And did they?”

“Look at it. There are thousands of signatures; literally thousands of all sorts and conditions of people signed it.”

“And you are going to stay, aren’t you?”

“*Vox populi vox Dei*,” David said. “On the Sunday before the epidemic broke out I announced in church that I felt it my duty to leave. It seemed madness on my part, but now I know the reason. It gave the people an opportunity of telling me how they loved me, and what my duty was.”

At that moment Tamsin Rashleigh was shown into the rector’s study.

“Tammy, my darling,” cried Naomi, rushing towards her friend. “You must forgive us for calling on David first, but you see——”

“You needn’t say any more,” laughed Tamsin, “but what were you all talking so solemnly about as I came in?”

“We were asking David whether he was going to stay in Gildershaw or not.”

“The people won’t let him go,” replied Tamsin joyfully, “hundreds upon hundreds have told me that. And—besides he’s promised to stay with me,” she added as she went and stood at David’s side.

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